

Jesus Began to Write:
Literacy, the *Pericope Adulterae*, and the Gospel of John

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I hereby declare that the following thesis is entirely my own work.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations in this thesis follow *SBL Handbook of Style* and include the following, which do not occur there.

AARSR	American Academy of Religion Studies in Religion
AAW	Approaching the Ancient World
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
AOTC	Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BiAC	The Bible in Ancient Christianity Series
BIMI	Bible and Its Modern Interpreters
BP	Bible and Postcolonialism
BRS	Biblical Resource Series
BS	Biblical Seminar
CCS	Cambridge Classical Studies
CCSA	Corpus Christianorum: Series Apocryphorum
CJA	Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity
CMP	Cultural Memory in the Present
COQG	Christian Origins and the Question of God (Wright)
CTNT	Companions to the New Testament
DAC	Dictionary of the Apostolic Church
DNTB	Dictionary of New Testament Background
ESCO	European Studies on Christian Origins
ET	English Translation
FemC	Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings Series
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
IAW	Inside the Ancient World
IBT	Interpreting Biblical Texts
IVPNTCS	IVP New Testament Commentary
JCM	Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World
JRASup	Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series (formerly <i>Studia Post-Biblica</i>)
JSRC	Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture Series
LXXG	Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Gottingensis editum
LXXRH	<i>Septuaginta</i> , ed. Alfred Rahlfs, rev. Robert Hanhart
LXXS	<i>The Old Testament in Greek</i> , ed. Henry Barclay Swete
MOGL	Monuments of the Old Georgian Language
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NTFF	New Testament Foundations and Facets
NTTh	New Testament Theology
OCPM	Oxford Classical and Philosophical Monographs
PBSR	Papers of the British School at Rome
RFCC	Religion in the First Christian Centuries

SBEC	Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity
SBLTCS	Society of Biblical Literature Text-Critical Studies
SFS	South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism
SLFCS	Studies in Literacy, Family, Culture and the State
SLT	Studies in the Lectionary Text of the Greek New Testament
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
TCH	Transformation of the Classical Heritage
TENTS	Texts and Editions for New Testament Study
VCSup	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae
VPT	Voices in Performance and Text

Introduction

The Most Popular Story in the Gospels

‘But with variant texts, there would remain the valid tasks of tracing the development of the variants in the history of textual transmission and of attempting to uncover reasons for the deviations. After all, these variant texts were for some Christians at some time and place the “original” text; it would be a denial of history to ignore them under any circumstances.’¹

This thesis will argue that John 8.6, 8—when Jesus twice ‘bent down and began to write on the earth’ in the *Pericope Adulterae* (John 7.53–8.11; hereafter PA)—is a claim that Jesus was a literate individual. Furthermore, it will argue that the claim that Jesus is capable of writing is an important key to understanding the insertion of PA into the Gospel of John (hereafter GJohn). The following study therefore offers a new interpretation and transmission-history of perhaps the most popular story in gospel tradition.

The demonstrable popularity of PA, in both its ancient and modern contexts, is unquestionable. On Tuesday, March 14, 2006, PA made its American cable television debut on one of the most watched shows on air. New Testament scholar Bart D. Ehrman appeared on Comedy Central’s *The Daily Show* with the programme’s host, comedian John Stewart, in order to discuss his recently released book, *Misquoting Jesus*.² The first part of the interview focussed solely upon what Ehrman described as ‘the most popular story, probably, in the Gospels,’ PA.³ As the interview unfolded, Ehrman discussed how this enigmatic pericope made its way into the Gospels, positing that it was originally marginalia that a scribe eventually included in the text itself, and said, ‘It not only didn’t happen probably, but it also

¹ Eldon Jay Epp, *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts* (SNTSMS 3; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 13.

² *The Daily Show*, Comedy Central, March 14, 2006; Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005).

³ Quotation from Ehrman’s interview on *The Daily Show*. In *Misquoting Jesus*, 63, Ehrman refers to PA similarly as ‘arguably the best-known story about Jesus in the Bible.’

wasn't originally in the Bible.' In response to this statement, Stewart asked why it would be added, and suggested humorously that readers thought the Bible needed some 'sex appeal' and so added 'a prostitute and some stones.'⁴ Ehrman responded, 'I think in this case they probably added the story because it taught Jesus' teachings about love and mercy so well.' Subsequently, on June 20, 2006, Ehrman appeared on another Comedy Central show, *The Colbert Report*, to discuss his book once more, and the only passage mentioned once again was the story of the woman taken in adultery.⁵

I open this doctoral thesis by mentioning these two interviews in order to draw attention to two things. First, the fact that Stewart and Colbert initiate their respective interviews by discussing PA demonstrates the tremendous popular appeal of the story amongst scholars, laity, and (perhaps especially) those who might not be considered 'biblically literate.' From this perspective, it is clearly the most interesting of the many interpolations to the manuscripts. Indeed, this passage even now has its own website⁶ and Wikipedia page.⁷ Second, as especially Stewart's interview reflects, a primary area of interest and curiosity with this passage is why a scribe inserted it in the first place. Ehrman accounts for the story's insertion with the love and mercy of Jesus reflected within it. Ehrman thus aligns himself with numerous other scholars, as almost all agree that Jesus' treatment of the adulteress is the critical factor in understanding PA's textual history. As already stated, I will suggest an alternative explanation. Presently, however, I will finish introducing the study with a fuller description of the thesis topic, including an overview of the chapters and some methodological comments.

1. The Inquiry of This Thesis

Despite the demonstrable popularity of PA at the general and scholarly level, there are very few sustained critical studies of the passage. Very little has changed

⁴ To my knowledge, only one (very rarely cited) tradition identifies the adulteress as a prostitute—Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti* 102 (PL 35.2307//CSEL 50.199), refers to her as a *meretrix* ('prostitute/harlot').

⁵ *The Colbert Report*, Comedy Central, June 20, 2006.

⁶ 'Pericope de Adultera Homepage,' n.p. [cited 12 February 2007]. Online: <http://adultera.awardspace.com>.

⁷ 'Jesus and the Woman Taken in Adultery,' n.p. [cited 23 November 2007]. Online: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pericope_adulterae.

since Crossan lamented that PA ‘still awaits the treatment it deserves’ in 1979.⁸ Of those studies that have been produced, only a handful recognize that John 8.6 and 8.8 are the only Jesus traditions in canonical or non-canonical tradition that portray Jesus as writing, applying the verbs *katagra, fw* (8.6) and *gra, fw* (8.8) to him. Outside of Jesus traditions proper, the fourth-century *Dialogue of Adamantius* (e.g., 2.13) is apparently the only other text that applies the verb *gra, fw* or its cognates to him. Thus, while the concept of a literate Jesus is not absent in early Christianity,⁹ the claim of John 8.6, 8 is a unique phenomenon in canonical and non-canonical Jesus traditions. To date, there is no full study intended to explain this claim of PA, and it is the task of this thesis to fill this lacuna.

However, the claim of a Jesus capable of writing (grapho-literacy) is not the sole point of interest in the current study, as I will propose that this unique image of Jesus is intricately related to where, why, and when PA entered the stream of Johannine gospel tradition. To that end, the chapters of this thesis will unfold in the following manner.

Chapters One to Four will provide an introduction and background for the specific argument of this thesis. Chapter One will review previous research on John 8.6, 8 and close by demonstrating that the narrator highlights Jesus’ acts of writing in PA. In contrast to much previous research, I will suggest that the significance lies not in *what* Jesus wrote but in the fact *that* he wrote. But can one assume that John 8.6, 8 portrays Jesus writing language, as opposed to, for example, drawing a picture? In answer to this question, Chapter Two will provide warrant for the claim that the interpolator intends to portray Jesus as writing alphabetized letters in John 8.6, 8. This chapter will survey *katagra, fw* in Greco-Roman, Jewish, and New Testament (hereafter NT) literary contexts, as well as survey *gra, fw* in the NT. Chapter Three will then situate the claim of grapho-literacy (the ability to write) in its ancient context by assessing who learned to write and how those individuals learned to write in Greco-Roman, Jewish, and early Christian discussions of alphabetic instruction. Chapter Four will build on the claims of Chapter Three by turning to consider the practitioners of writing in Second Temple Judaism, the

⁸ John Dominic Crossan, *Finding is the First Act: Trove Folktales and Jesus’ Treasure Parables* (SemeiaSt; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 100.

⁹ See Chapter Nine.

scribes. Specifically under consideration in this chapter is the manner in which some scribes—such as the opponents of Jesus in John 8.2—employed their grapho-literacy in their roles as authoritative ‘text-brokers,’ mediating the holy Torah to the illiterate masses.

Following these preliminary observations, Chapters Five to Eight will consider PA itself. Chapter Five will assess the twelve manuscript locations for PA, but will argue, based upon manuscript and patristic evidence, that when an interpolator first inserted PA into (canonical) gospel tradition, he did so at John 7.53–8.11. If the interpolator chose the location of John 7.53–8.11, however, one must ask “Why?” Chapter Six will answer that the interpolator chose John 7.53–8.11 as the result of a close reading of GJohn’s narrative, and specifically as a response to John 7.15 and 7.52, where Jesus’ literacy and identity as a prophet are called into question, respectively. Chapter Seven will provide a fresh exegesis of PA in dialogue with present research on the passage. Chapter Eight will then turn its attention to the main focus of this thesis, offering an original interpretation of John 8.6, 8. This chapter will demonstrate that the interpolator borrowed language from the divine authorship of the Decalogue in Exodus 32.15 in order to claim that Jesus was not only an equal authority on Mosaic Law as his opponents, but that Jesus was superior, indeed superior even to Moses himself.

Chapter Nine will close the thesis by presenting a plausible socio-historical context for the interpolator’s insertion of PA into GJohn at John 7.53–8.11. Arguing against the widespread theory that the early Church ‘suppressed’ PA based on Jesus’ leniency with the adulteress, this chapter will instead argue that PA’s transmission-history is explained by the church’s need for literate leaders, and thus its need for its leader *par excellence* to be literate.

In offering an original interpretation of John 8.6, 8, as well as original research on the context of PA’s insertion, this thesis joins other recent studies that dwell at the intersection of textual criticism and the history of early Christianity (and its literature).¹⁰ Such research is the result of calls to employ textual criticism for

¹⁰ Amongst others, see Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Kim Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Wayne C. Kannaday, *Apologetic Discourse and the Scribal Tradition: Evidence of the Influence of Apologetic Interests on the Text of the Canonical Gospels* (SBLTCS 5; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).

purposes other than recovering an ‘original text,’¹¹ and the assumption that the texts themselves reflect the various milieus in which early Christians read, copied, and transmitted their literature. For this particular study, however, further methodological comments are needed.

2. *Methodological Notes on Constructing the Question*

Investigating Jesus’ acts of writing in PA amounts to entangling oneself in a complicated methodological problem, a problem that places constraints on how this study must proceed at almost every stage. Two minor assumptions can be noted briefly. First, I assume that PA was not an original part of GJohn.¹² Second, I assume that ultimate responsibility for the version of PA that appears at John 7.53–8.11 lies with the individual(s) who inserted it, whether he inherited a particular element of the tradition or created that element prior to PA’s insertion. Therefore, where many scholarly studies would normally employ language of the ‘author’ or ‘implied author’ in order to reflect the individual with ‘creative control’ of the tradition, this thesis will primarily refer to the ‘interpolator,’ and occasionally refer to the ‘narrator’ when focussing upon the narrative dynamics of PA. Furthermore, since most early Christian scribes were men, I will use masculine personal pronouns to refer to the interpolator.

The more significant methodological issues are as follows. First, there are no good reasons for doubting that the essential scene presented in the pericope—Jesus challenged by Jewish leaders regarding the Mosaic punishment of a known sinner—is traceable to the Historical Jesus, and thus a first-century investigative background would seem proper. Numerous extra-biblical citations of the story from a bewilderingly broad geographical background, from Papias in Hierapolis to Didymus in Alexandria to Pacian in Barcelona to Bede in Britain, support the notion that this was one of the most popular stories in the early Church from at least the post-apostolic period and continued to be at every stage of Church history down to the

¹¹ On the problem of the ‘original text,’ see Eldon Jay Epp, ‘It’s All About Variants: A Variant-Conscious Approach to New Testament Textual Criticism,’ *HTR* 100.3 (2007): 275–308; Eldon Jay Epp, ‘The Multivalence of the Term “Original Text” in New Testament Textual Criticism,’ *HTR* 92.3 (1999): 245–81; D. C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); William L. Petersen, ‘What Text Can New Testament Textual Criticism Ultimately Reach?,’ in *New Testament Textual Criticism, Exegesis, and Early Church History: A Discussion of Methods* (eds. Barbara Aland and Joël Delobel; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994), 136–52.

¹² See Chris Keith, ‘Recent and Previous Research on the *Pericope Adulterae* (John 7.53–8.11),’ *CBR*, forthcoming, n.p.

present. A majority of commentators, therefore, note the antiquity of the scene and accept the pericope as an authentic event in the life of the Historical Jesus.¹³

Second, however, the earliest clear extra-biblical references to Jesus' actions of writing in the pericope do not occur until Ambrose in the late fourth century and Jerome and Augustine in the early fifth century. The earliest manuscript to contain PA, Codex Bezae, also contains the account of the writing and derives from the same period (ca. 400 CE) and linguistic milieu, as it is a Greek/Latin diglot. Combined with the fact that the three earliest Christian authors to demonstrate knowledge of Jesus' writing in PA (Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine) also demonstrate knowledge of the pericope's presence in GJohn, a rather different investigative background emerges as the proper one for, specifically, Jesus' writing (John 8.6, 8)—the context of the Western church leading up to these authors; that is, perhaps the third and fourth centuries CE.

Third, and related to the second point just discussed, there is a strong connection between the acts of writing in John 8.6, 8 and the pericope's presence in GJohn. First, the writers who know of Jesus' writing demonstrably know the pericope in GJohn. Second, the writers who do not mention the act of writing show no overt knowledge of the pericope in that gospel or the Synoptics (and some, such as Eusebius and possibly Didymus, seem to know the story in non-canonical contexts). Third, to my present knowledge, every gospel manuscript that *does* contain PA also contains Jesus' writing. These three factors suggest that those individuals in the ancient Church who read of Jesus' writing read it in GJohn. It is *possible*, therefore, that Jesus' writing in John 8.6, 8 was not added to the first-century tradition until a scribe inserted the pericope into GJohn in, for example, the third or fourth century. There is, of course, no way this theory can be proved or disproved since it relies entirely upon an argument from silence, specifically the silence of extracanonical authors who reference the story but not the act of writing. This is, though, a particularly curious silence.

¹³ For the sake of clarity, note that the argument of this thesis does not concern the Historical Jesus, nor do I assume that PA is authentic to the Historical Jesus (although, as mentioned, I find no good reasons to doubt that its central elements are). I am here simply observing that many scholars do, and that, under that assumption, the natural corollary would be to see PA against a first-century backdrop. As I observe in the main text, this backdrop alone would be insufficient for considering John 8.6, 8.

These three considerations—the acknowledged antiquity of the story, the late date for knowledge of Jesus’ writing in the story, and the strong connection between Jesus’ writing and a canonical gospel context—together suggest that the early Church knew generally of the story of the adulteress almost from the beginning but (possibly) did not know specifically of Jesus’ acts of writing (or at least did not find them worthy of comment) until the fourth century. These factors force the chronological breadth of this study to be around 300 years, from the mid-first century CE to the late fourth century CE.

The appeal to data from within this context must be fluid rather than confined to one historical pole at the expense of the other. So, for example, when assessing Jesus’ writing in the pericope, one cannot rely upon its apparent antiquity and ask why a first-century Christian would want to portray Jesus as writing—the act of writing *may* not have been added until much, much later. Equally, one cannot rely solely upon the context of the later church and ask why a third- or fourth-century Christian would have wanted to portray Jesus as writing, for several reasons. First, it is not clear that the act of writing *was* added to the pericope only at that stage, much less demonstrable. The mention of Jesus writing could have existed from the beginning but only become worthy of comment in the later context (and this is the safest way to proceed with the evidence). Second, the *Inf. Gos. Thom.*, emerging from Christian circles in the second century CE, similarly demonstrates Jesus’ authority via literacy, but does so in what is a thoroughly Hellenistic school setting where Jesus ‘out-teaches’ his teachers when he waxes eloquent on the Greek alphabet. In stark contrast to this image of an educated Jesus, PA portrays a first-century Jewish Jesus engaging first-century Jewish leaders about a first-century Jewish interpretive issue. In fact, other than the acts of writing and perhaps including them, the story fits flawlessly with other Jesus tradition in the four gospels that scholars acknowledge derived from the first century CE. That is, unlike the *Inf. Gos. Thom.*, which takes a historical character almost all recognized to have lived in a first-century Palestinian environment and adopts him into a different context (being the son of a Galilean artisan, the Historical Jesus would not have been privileged enough to receive a Greek education), PA takes a historical character most recognized to have lived in a first-century Palestinian environment and portrays him in just that context. One must reckon with the fact that, even if, for example, the *Inf. Gos. Thom.* and PA emerge from the same impetus in early Christianity to portray the authority of Jesus in terms of literacy (and I will argue that they do), they attempt

to paint their respective images of Jesus on different canvases. Further, the interpolating scribe who placed PA in GJohn *may* have simply brushed a few extra strokes on an authentic first-century portrait (PA) before placing it amidst other first-century portraits (the gospels).

Therefore, the question must be framed to account for all these complexities and contingencies, and is thus: *Why would a Christian around the third century CE want to portray a first-century Jesus as capable of writing?*¹⁴ Even this tightly crafted question, however, does not avoid the aforementioned complexities and I here note just one example. As already mentioned, John 8.6, 8 conveys Jesus' writing by using the verbs *katagra, fw* (John 8.6) and *gra, fw* (John 8.8). Given that this aspect of the pericope may not have been added until the third or fourth century, one could assume that this later context would be the proper semantic domain for investigating the definitions of these verbs. However, even *if* the acts of writing were not added to the rest of the story until the third or fourth century, one cannot appeal solely to the later context. Doing so would oversimplify the situation, since the interpolator clearly wanted PA to be read as part of a first-century text. Furthermore, the symbolic world of the first-century text into which the interpolator inserted PA, GJohn, was strongly influenced by the LXX. A possible chronological chasm between the context of the authorship of GJohn and the context of the interpolator's insertion of PA is mitigated further by the fact that the LXX was read as Christian scripture as much in the late first century CE as it was in the fourth century CE.¹⁵

In sum, then, the nature of the evidence and the wide time periods included therein mean that attaining an answer to why individuals like Jerome or Ambrose are the first to know of Jesus' writing in the story (in GJohn) is not a straightforward matter. (And even here, one must note that asking why Ambrose and Jerome found Jesus' writing in PA to be significant differs from asking why the interpolator did so, no matter how much the overlap in their respective contexts.) Still, the fact remains that an interpolator took a unique image of Jesus and placed it into a manuscript, and

¹⁴ One may here ask why the focus is placed upon the third century, as opposed to, for example, the second or fourth. Though this is, at this point, merely a heuristic device, it is one in keeping with the available evidence. Chapters Five and Nine will discuss this evidence further.

¹⁵ The LXX will not be the only context considered in the fuller discussion in Chapter Two, however.

thus the narrative world, of GJohn, where it was copied over and over and eventually became a constitutive element of the authoritative image of Jesus throughout Christian history. With the methodological caveats noted here in mind, the present study will proceed to offer an answer to why he did so.

Chapter One

A History of Research on John 8.6, 8

‘Jesus declines to give an immediate answer. Instead he bent down . . . and drew on the dusty ground with his finger. Thereby he set an unanswerable conundrum for exegetes of all time.’¹

The present chapter will survey the numerous and various interpretations of John 8.6, 8, where Jesus writes on the ground during his confrontation with the scribes and the Pharisees.² Following this survey, I will present a new interpretation of Jesus’ actions in these verses, arguing that the text itself highlights not what or how Jesus writes, but rather *that* he writes. That is, John 8.6, 8 is a claim that Jesus was capable of writing (grapho-literacy). The remainder of this thesis will argue in detail not only that this is the correct interpretation of John 8.6, 8, but that this interpretation is also the key to understanding when, where, and why an interpolator eventually inserted PA into GJohn.

1. Previous Assessments of John 8.6, 8

In response to the request of ‘the scribes and the Pharisees’ to interpret the Mosaic Law in PA, Jesus bends down and writes in the ground (*katagra*, fw, *hapax legomenon* in NT) in John 8.6b, speaks John 8.7, then writes again in John 8.8 (*gra*, fw). Discussing this action and the scholarly spectrum surrounding this passage, O’Day observes, ‘John 7:53–8:11 becomes completely malleable in the hands of interpreters who seek to discover what Jesus wrote on the ground.’³ Likewise, Beasley-Murray says, ‘What did he write? We cannot tell, but that does not prevent the exegetes from guessing!’⁴ It is certainly true that no shortage of creativity has been spent on speculating the content and/or significance of Jesus’

¹ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (2d ed.; WBC 36; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 146.

² For a general history of research on PA itself, rather than just John 8.6, 8, see Keith, ‘Recent,’ n.p.

³ Gail R. O’Day, ‘John 7:53–8:11: A Study in Misreading,’ *JBL* 111.4 (1992): 635.

⁴ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 146.

writing.⁵ Scholars have offered at least thirty-six possible explanations for Jesus' actions. It is helpful at the outset to acknowledge Sanders' observation that 'there are three factors to note in Jesus' writing: the writing itself, writing with a finger, and writing on the ground,' as interpreters will focus alternately on each of these factors.⁶ I begin with scriptural intertextual interpretations of John 8.6, 8.

1.1 Scriptural Intertextual Interpretations of John 8.6, 8

(1) One of the earliest suggestions, that of Ambrose, is that Jesus 'wrote on the ground with the finger with which He had written the Law.'⁷ Ambrose thus connects Jesus' writing on the ground in PA to God's writing of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 31.18//Deuteronomy 9.10, since both were accomplished *tw/| daktu, lw|* ('with the finger,' John 8.6//Exodus 31.18//Deuteronomy 9.10 LXX).⁸ With this identification, Ambrose attributes a high Christology to PA, and is followed by Augustine and a number of modern scholars.⁹ Chapter Eight will affirm interpreting Jesus' writing in light of Exodus 31.18 and the narrative of God's authorship of the Law, but add a heretofore entirely neglected nuance that significantly strengthens this theory. (2) Beyond a symbolic connection, Guilding suggests that Jesus actually wrote 'the words of the Decalogue.'¹⁰ (3) Rather than the entirety of the Decalogue, Keener tentatively proposes that Jesus writes the first

⁵ As will be obvious, some scholars view the writing on the ground as a prophetic symbolic act irrespective of the content of the writing.

⁶ James A. Sanders, "'Nor Do I . . .': A Canonical Reading of the Challenge to Jesus in John 8," in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 341.

⁷ Ambrose, *Epistle* 68 (26) (Beyenka, FC). The enumeration of Ambrose's letters is a matter of some debate. I have here and throughout employed the CSEL enumeration with PL enumeration placed in parentheses.

⁸ Exodus 31.18//Deuteronomy 9.10 MT—[B; c . a , B . .

⁹ Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 33.5; John Albert Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament* (completed by eds. M. Ernest Bengel and J. C. F. Steudel; trans. Andrew R. Fausset; 3 vols.; 7th ed.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1873), 2.350; Charles P. Baylis, 'The Woman Caught in Adultery: A Test of Jesus as the Greater Prophet,' *BSac* 146 (1989): 180; Beverley Warren Coleman, 'The Woman Taken in Adultery: Studies in Texts: John 7:53–8:11,' *Theology* 73 (1970): 409–10; Aileen Guilding, *The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship: A Study of the Relation of St. John's Gospel to the Ancient Jewish Lectionary System* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 112; Zane C. Hodges, 'The Woman Taken in Adultery (John 7:53–8:11): Exposition,' *BSac* 137 (1980): 46, 51n.14; Alan F. Johnson, 'A Re-examination of the *Pericope Adulterae*, John 7:53–8:11' (Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1964), 221–2; Josep Rius-Camps, 'Origen Lucano de la Perícopa de la Mujer Adúltera (Jn 7,53–8,11),' *Filología Neotestamentaria* 6 (1993): 171–2; Sanders, "'Nor Do I'," 342; Harald Schöndorf, 'Jesus schreibt mit dem Finger auf die Erde: Joh 8,6b.8,' *BZ* 40.1 (1996): 92.

¹⁰ Guilding, *Fourth Gospel*, 112.

line of the tenth commandment from LXX Exodus 20.17.¹¹ (4) In the same letter in which he associates the writing with the Decalogue, Ambrose claims that the symbolic judgment includes reference to the New Testament as well when he tells his reader: ‘But He wrote a second time, so that you may know that the Jews were condemned by both Testaments.’¹² (5) In another context, Ambrose offers a solution to the exact words that Jesus wrote on the ground: ‘What did He write except the prophetic saying: “Earth, earth, write that these men have been disowned,” that which is written in the Prophet Jeremias concerning Jechonias?’¹³ This is a reference to Jeremiah 22.29–30. (6) Paul S. Minear suggests that since Jesus/God wrote on the ground, ‘the good news was an authentic cancellation of the curse on the earth’ from Genesis 4.10–12.¹⁴ (7) Augustine offers another interpretation, which is that the writing on the ground possibly means ‘that the time was now come when His law should be written, not, as formerly, on the sterile stone, but on a soil that would yield fruit.’¹⁵ (8) An eighth suggestion connects Jesus’ writing on the ground to Jeremiah 17.13, which refers to sinners being written on the ground. Schnackenburg says, ‘Jesus refers them to the judgement of God, before whom all men are sinners. They are all fit to be “written in the earth.”’¹⁶ While one can trace this interpretation to Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome, others supporting it are Eisler, Jeremias, and McDonald.¹⁷ (9) Whitacre accepts the Jeremiah 17.13 solution, but (tentatively) proposes further that since his opponents did not understand his allusion to the prophetic text in John 8.6, Jesus made it explicit for them by writing their names when he wrote again in 8.8.¹⁸ (10) Derrett suggests a tenth possibility—Jesus wrote

¹¹ Craig S. Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 284. He adds, ‘This proposal is at best speculation.’ See also Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 2003), 1.737.

¹² Ambrose, *Epistle* 68 (26) (Beyenka, FC).

¹³ Ambrose, *Epistle* 50 (25) (Beyenka, FC).

¹⁴ Paul S. Minear, ‘Writing on the Ground: The Puzzle in John 8:1–11,’ *HBT* 13 (1991): 29.

¹⁵ Augustine, *Cons.* 4.10.17 (Salmond, *NPNF*¹). See also his *Enarrat. Ps.* 102.11.37–39.

¹⁶ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to St. John*, (trans. Cecily Hastings et al.; 3 vols.; London: Burns and Oates, 1980), 2.166.

¹⁷ Ambrose, *Epistle* 68 (26); Augustine, *Cons.* 4.10.17; *Leg* 1.44; Jerome, *Pelag.* 2.17; Robert Eisler, ‘Jesus und die ungetreue Braut,’ *ZNW* 22 (1923): 306–7; Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (trans. S. H. Hooke; rev. ed.; London: SCM Press Ltd., 1963), 228; J. Ian H. McDonald, ‘The So-Called *Pericope de Adultera*,’ *NTS* 41 (1995): 421.

¹⁸ Rodney A. Whitacre, *John* (IVPNTCS; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 208.

Exodus 23.1b in John 8.6b and Exodus 23.7a in John 8.8.¹⁹ Though Derrett's knowledge of Jewish legal practice is evident throughout the article, few have accepted this solution as it requires an incredibly creative reader (original and modern) and is based upon Derrett's speculation as to how many Hebrew characters a human can write from a sitting position.²⁰ (11) Aus' solution is one of the few that can rival Derrett's in terms of creativity. He proposes that Jesus wrote Malachi 2.11 in John 8.6b and Hosea 4.14 in John 8.8.²¹ (12) Bowman's is another solution that can rival Derrett's. Positing that GJohn 'is an attack on the values of the Book of Esther,' Bowman suggests that Jesus possibly wrote 'Esther' in John 8.6b and 'Haman' in John 8.8.²² (13) S. Daniel offers a thirteenth suggestion, which focuses on a theme of judgement and connects the writing to the handwriting on the wall of Daniel 5.24.²³ More recently, Brodie, as well as Holmes and Winfield, make this connection.²⁴ (14) Osborne proposes that Jesus wrote the words of *Sus.* 5: 'Iniquity came forth from Babylon, from elders who were judges, who were supposed to govern the people.'²⁵ Elsewhere I have argued against the likelihood of PA's literary dependence on *Sus.*²⁶

¹⁹ J. Duncan M. Derrett, 'Law in the New Testament: The Story of the Woman Taken in Adultery,' *NTS* 10 (1963–1964): 18–23. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: 1971), 888–9, seems to accept Derrett's proposal.

²⁰ Derrett, 'Law,' 18: 'Dust is dust and sand is sand and no one of average or above-average height can write more than sixteen Hebrew characters in a row from such a position and in such an attitude.'

²¹ Roger David Aus, "*Caught in the Act*," *Walking on the Sea, and the Release of Barabbas Revisited* (SFS 154; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 28–34.

²² John Bowman, *The Fourth Gospel and the Jews: A Study in R. Akiba, Esther and the Gospel of John* (PTMS 8; Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1975), 177.

²³ S. Daniel, 'Znaczenie wyrażenia "Palec Boży" w Pismie świętym (Vis Digni Dei in Scriptura Sacra subiecta),' *RBL* 10.4–5 (1957): 247–60, as reviewed by J. C. Jarski, '553,' *NTA* 2 (1958): 228.

²⁴ Thomas L. Brodie, *The Quest for the Origin of John's Gospel: A Source-Oriented Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 158–9; Barbara A. Holmes and Susan R. Holmes Winfield, 'Sex, Stones, and Power Games: A Woman Caught at the Intersection of Law and Religion (John 7:53–8:11),' in *Pregnant Passion: Gender, Sex, and Violence in the Bible* (ed. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan; SemSt 44; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 160–61.

²⁵ Robert O. Osborne, 'Pericope Adulterae,' *Canadian Journal of Theology* 12.4 (1966): 282.

²⁶ Keith, 'Recent' n.p.

1.2 Miscellaneous Other Interpretations of John 8.6, 8

(15) A fifteenth solution, originating with Jerome, is that Jesus wrote the sins of the accusers in the ground.²⁷ This idea eventually gained textual status in the Armenian tenth-century Edschmiadzin codex as well as a number of other manuscripts.²⁸ Cecil B. DeMille interprets Jesus' writing along these lines in his 1927 film *The King of Kings*.²⁹ (16) Recently, Toensing offers a 'two-stage' variant of this interpretation. She suggests that Jesus wrote not the sins themselves, but 'other kinds of accusations' that the law condemns (i.e., in addition to adultery, with which the scribes and the Pharisees are particularly concerned) in 8.6, and then he clarified in 8.8 'that these accusations could be applied to them.'³⁰ (17) Metzger records that the tenth-century Codex Egberti and eleventh-century Gospel Book of Hitda of Maschede agree on what Jesus wrote in their iconographic representation of the scene—the phrase *terra terram accusat* ('earth accuses earth').³¹ (18) Manson offers another solution to the problem by suggesting that Jesus was following Roman custom. He states, 'I have for some time thought that the action of Jesus might be explained by the well-known practice in Roman criminal law, whereby the presiding judge first wrote down the sentence and then read it aloud from the written record.'³² Manson claims this interpretation fits the scenario that Jeremias suggests, that Jesus was being asked to usurp Roman authority by pronouncing on a capital punishment case. Thus, 'Jesus defeats the plotters by going through the form of pronouncing sentence in the best Roman style, but wording it so that it cannot be executed.'³³

²⁷ Jerome, *Pelag.* 2.17. David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (ed. Peter C. Hodgson; trans. George Eliot; Lives of Jesus Series; London: SCM Press, 1972), 409, finds this interpretation lacking.

²⁸ For a translation of Edschmiadzin PA, see F. C. Conybeare, 'On the Last Twelve Verses of St. Mark's Gospel,' *Expositor* 5.2 (1895): 406. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2d ed.; New York: United Bible Society, 1994), 190, notes that U P 73 331 364 700 782 1592 arm^{mss} all add e[noj e`ka, stou auvtw/n ta.j a`marti, aj ('the sins of each one of them') after gh/n in John 8.8.

²⁹ My thanks to Dwight Friesen for alerting me to DeMille's portrayal of PA.

³⁰ Holly J. Toensing, 'Divine Intervention or Divine Intrusion?: Jesus and the Adulteress in John's Gospel,' in *A Feminist Companion to John, Volume 1* (eds. Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff; FemC 4; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 164, 165, respectively.

³¹ Bruce M. Metzger, 'A Lexicon of Christian Iconography,' *CH* 45.1 (1976): 8.

³² T. W. Manson, 'The Pericope de Adultera (Joh 7₅₃–8₁₁),' *ZNW* 44 (1952): 255–6.

³³ Manson, 'Pericope de Adultera,' 256. See Joachim Jeremias, 'Zur Geschichtlichkeit des Verhörs Jesu vor dem Hohen Rat,' *ZNW* 43 (1950–1951): 145–50.

Lightfoot and Riesner follow Manson, while both Schnackenburg and Brown offer critiques.³⁴ (19) Bruce and Morrice also follow Manson, but suggest, more specifically, that Jesus wrote the words of John 8.7.³⁵ Godet suggested this in the nineteenth century, and even further that the words of 8.7 were split evenly between 8.6 and 8.8.³⁶ (20) Burgon suggests that the writing was in connection with the test of the bitter waters (Numbers 5.16–24), ‘and perhaps when He stooped down and wrote upon the ground, it was a bitter sentence against the adulterer and adulteress which He wrote.’³⁷ (21) A twenty-first possible solution is that Jesus wrote on the ground as a refusal to participate or to delay offering judgement. This idea is popular and appears variously in a number of scholarly assessments of the writing.³⁸ Schnackenburg correctly rejects this interpretation: ‘But this is unsatisfactory, since the gesture, twice described, is given a certain emphasis.’³⁹ (22) Building upon the delay/refusal idea, Peter Chrysologus (fifth century CE) claims Jesus’ writing is an act of forgiveness: ‘He preferred, brethren, to write forgiveness in the sand rather than to utter a condemnation about the flesh.’⁴⁰ (23) Though he pictures Jesus as

³⁴ R. H. Lightfoot, *St. John’s Gospel: A Commentary* (ed. C. F. Evans; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 347–8; Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer: Eine Untersuchung zum Ursprung der Evangelien-Überlieferung* (WUNT 2.7; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981), 231; Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to St. John*, 2.165; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII* (AB 29; New York: Doubleday, 1966), 333–4.

³⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 415; William Morrice, *Hidden Sayings of Jesus: Words Attributed to Jesus Outside the Four Gospels* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 35–36.

³⁶ Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on John’s Gospel* (trans. and ed. Timothy Dwight; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1978), 648.

³⁷ John William Burgon, *The Causes of the Corruption of the Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels* (ed. Edward Miller; London: George Bell and Sons, 1896), 240. Cf. Bengel, *Gnomon*, 2.351, who considers this possibility but dismisses it.

³⁸ See C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (2d ed.; London: SPCK, 1978), 591; J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* (ed. A. H. McNeile; 2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1928), 2.719; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 336; Michel Gourgues, ‘“Moi non plus je ne te condamne”: Les mots et la théologie de Luc en Jean 8, 1–11 (la femme adultère),’ *SR* 19.3 (1990): 314; Colin G. Kruse, *The Gospel According to John: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 200–201; Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1972), 310; O’Day, ‘John 7:53–8:11,’ 632; E. Power, ‘Writing on the Ground (Joh. 8, 6. 8),’ *Bib* 2 (1921): 54–57; Alan Watson, ‘Jesus and the Adulteress,’ *Bib* 80.1 (1999): 103; Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (2 vols.; London: John Murray, 1908), 2.384; Ben Witherington, III, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (ed. Ann Witherington; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 39.

³⁹ Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to St. John*, 2.166.

⁴⁰ Peter Chrysologus, *Sermon 115* (Ganss, FC).

‘awaiting’ and ‘disinterested’ in his questioners as does some other solutions, J. Becker claims that the writing itself is decorative, a ‘novellistisch-ausschmückendes Detail,’ and ‘Wäre der Akt des Malens konstitutiv für Jesu Antwort, hätte der Erzähler wohl substantiell mehr gesagt.’⁴¹ The editors of *EDNT* follow Becker, claiming this is ‘probably a narrative detail intended to show Jesus’ superiority over his questioners.’⁴² One may here properly ask what would *not* qualify as a ‘narrative detail.’ Schöndorf responds with an appropriate critique that labelling the writing as such underestimates its importance to the scene. Paralleling the response of Schnackenburg quoted above, he states,

Die Ansicht Beckers ist alles andere als überzeugend. Wenn im Verlauf von elf Versen eine Handlung zweimal berichtet wird, dann ist sie nicht nur ein «novellistisch-ausschmückendes Detail», sondern ein wichtiges Element des Textes.⁴³

(24) Guardiola-Sáenz, employing Postcolonial and Border Theory, sees the possible delay as Jesus opening ‘a hybrid moment’ or ‘space of silence’: ‘The silence between discourses is a possible interstice to subvert their oppressive system; for them to reflect, transform and break the patriarchal ideology behind their actions.’⁴⁴

(25) Rather than delaying the process, Young proposes that Jesus wrote on the ground for dramatic effect—‘With a prophetic gesture, Jesus wrote in the dirt to capture the attention and the careful consideration of his listeners.’⁴⁵ Along these lines, Gench, Kinukawa, McDonald, and Scott also draw attention to the dramatic effect of the action.⁴⁶ (26) Disagreeing with the ‘delay’ interpretation, Wensinck

⁴¹ Jürgen Becker, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes, Kapitel 1–10* (ÖTBK 4.1; Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1979), 284.

⁴² *EDNT* 2.257.

⁴³ Schöndorf, ‘Jesus schreibt,’ 92.

⁴⁴ Leticia A. Guardiola-Sáenz, ‘Border-crossing and its Redemptive Power in John 7.53–8.11: A Cultural Reading of Jesus and the Accused,’ in *John and Postcolonialism: Travel, Space and Power* (ed. Musa W. Dube and Jeffrey A. Staley; BP 7; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 147, 148.

⁴⁵ Brad H. Young, “‘Save the Adulteress’: Ancient Jewish *Responsa* in the Gospels?,” *NTS* 41 (1995): 69.

⁴⁶ Frances Taylor Gench, *Back to the Well: Women’s Encounters with Jesus in the Gospels* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 139; Hisako Kinukawa, ‘On John 7:53–8:11: A Well-Cherished but Much-Clouded Story,’ in *Reading from This Place: Volume 2* (eds. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 91; McDonald, ‘So-called,’ 421n.21; J. Martin C. Scott, ‘John,’ in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (eds. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1182.

finds parallels in Islamic tradition and claims that the writing reflects the seriousness of the situation: 'It will be clear that Jesus does not write on the ground as an indication of His overlooking the question of His adversaries or of His disregard of them, but on the contrary because He is reflecting upon the grave case and on the grave answer He is moulding in His mind.'⁴⁷ (27) More creatively, Humbert proposes that Jesus' writing on the ground was actually an act of conjuring since 'the conjurer writes on the ground, *i.e.* with his finger he draws lines, shaped into writing, and then infers omen.'⁴⁸ (28) Citing second-hand information, Farrar references an Arabian custom witnessed by a pastor in Algiers whereby, in a debate, one of the men wrote the points of discussion with his finger in the sand.⁴⁹ Farrar then states that his 'unknown correspondent' surmised that Jesus wrote 'their statement of the law' being debated in John 8.6 and then a further point of discussion in John 8.8.⁵⁰ (29) Though he refers to the 'dramatic pause' of Jesus' second act of writing, Lincoln ultimately suggests that the writing in general is a 'counter-challenge': 'This has the effect of disengaging him from the immediacy of the challenge and diverting attention away from the opponents, who are temporarily caught off their guard and disadvantaged.'⁵¹ (30) Temple sees Jesus' writing not as a 'counter-challenge' but as stress relief due to his volatile anger at the situation. He says, 'But the Lord is tortured with the horror of it all. He will not look at them or at her. He stoops down to hide the burning confusion of His face and relieves His agitation by tracing patterns in the dust.'⁵² (31) Another possible solution is that Jesus was not 'writing,' but rather 'doodling' in the ground, or 'tracing patterns' as Temple says. This may have originated, pejoratively, with some of Augustine's 'pagan' opponents who saw

⁴⁷ A. J. Wensinck, 'John VIII. 6, 8,' in *Amicitiae Corolla: A Volume of Essays Presented to James Rendel Harris, D. Litt. On the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday* (ed. H. G. Wood; London: University of London Press, 1933), 302. Eric F. F. Bishop, 'The Pericope Adulterae: A Suggestion,' *JTS* 35 (1934): 45, follows Wensinck.

⁴⁸ Paul Humbert, 'Jesus Writing on the Ground (John viii. 6–8),' *ExpTim* 30 (1918–1919): 475–6. D. S. Margoliouth, 'Jesus Writing on the Ground,' *ExpTim* 31 (1919–1920): 38, strongly criticizes Humbert's use of his source.

⁴⁹ F. W. Farrar, 'The Gospel for Penitents; and Christ Writing on the Ground. St. John vii. 53–viii. 11,' *Expositor* 9 (1879): 40–41.

⁵⁰ Farrar, 'Gospel,' 41.

⁵¹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (BNTC; London: Continuum, 2005), 532, 531, respectively.

⁵² William Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1945), 151. Cf. F. B. Meyer, *Gospel of John: The Life and Light of Man, Love to the Utmost* (Fort Washington: Christian Literature Crusade, 1970), 122.

Jesus' double act of writing as 'childish.'⁵³ This solution suggests that Jesus' actions are not lettered writing but the mindless drawing of shapes in the dirt. Power provides Arabic instances of such behaviour, but their applicability to PA's context of interpretation of a sacred text is questionable.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, numerous other scholars make similar comments suggesting that Jesus was 'scribbling,' 'doodling,' or writing something nonsensical.⁵⁵ As Chapter Two will demonstrate, this explanation is highly unlikely due to the verbs of John 8.6b (*katagra, fw*) and 8.8 (*gra, fw*). (32) Though not 'doodling,' Kelber views Jesus' writing as 'a parody of formal, literary writing and the permanence that comes with texts and words etched in stone.'⁵⁶ Kelber's proposal highlights some of the neglected elements of Jesus' writing, but does not take full account of PA's gospel context(s). Bernard and Crossan also note the impermanence of Jesus' writing.⁵⁷ Holmes and Winfield build on the impermanence and suggest a connection between God's authorship of the Decalogue, the writing on the wall in Daniel, and Jesus' writing in the sand: 'There is a symbolic progression in the examples of divine writing in biblical text, from stone tablets to walls and now to sand.'⁵⁸ (33) Aichele offers a reading of Jesus' writing that he terms 'post-canonical.'⁵⁹ Through the lens of semiotics and Derridean emphases, Aichele suggests that Jesus' writing in John 8.6 and 8.8 underscores the inability of texts to signify fully their referents, an emphasis found in John 21.25, which claims that no amount of text could fully contain the activities of

⁵³ Augustine, *Faust.* 22.25 (Stoithert, *NPNF^l*).

⁵⁴ Power, 'Writing,' 54–57. Only one of the six examples cited by Power is related to the interpretation of laws.

⁵⁵ Bishop, 'Pericope Adulterae,' 44–45; Craig A. Evans, 'Context, Family, and Formation,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus* (ed. Markus Bockmuehl; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 16; Gordon J. Keddie, *A Study Commentary on John* (2 vols.; Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2001), 1.314; Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Gospel of John* (NCBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 152; Stephen J. Patterson, 'Orphan Sayings and Stories,' in *The Complete Gospels* (ed. Robert J. Miller; Santa Rosa: Polebridge, 1994), 453n.Jn 8.6; Scott, 'John,' 1182; Tom Thatcher, *Jesus the Riddler: The Power of Ambiguity in the Gospels* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 98. George Aichele, 'Reading Jesus Writing,' *BibInt* 12.4 (2004): 367, claims commentators 'never consider that he might have written something silly, unimportant, or nonsensical.'

⁵⁶ Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (VPT; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 18.

⁵⁷ Bernard, *Gospel According to St. John*, 2.719; Crossan, *Finding*, 100.

⁵⁸ Holmes and Winfield, 'Sex, Stones, and Power Games,' 160.

⁵⁹ Aichele, 'Reading,' 366.

Jesus, the divine *logos*. In light of this, Aichele claims, ‘The Gospel of John finally does show the reader what Jesus wrote, and that Jesus’ words [from John 8.6 and 8.8] appear in the texts of John 20:30–31 and 21:24–25. In other words, Jesus’s written words do appear, not in John 8, but at the very end of John’s Gospel.’⁶⁰ Therefore, for Aichele, ‘The dirt in which Jesus writes is itself the text of John.’⁶¹ Aichele helpfully resituates the discussion, but, admittedly against poststructuralist interpretive stances, the present study is concerned with what the original individual (or individuals) who inserted PA into GJohn were trying to do.⁶² (34) Staley references Jesus’ writing as a metaphor for his full participation in humanity in an intertextual reading of PA.⁶³ Centuries before, the Venerable Bede had also seen Jesus’ writing in terms of his unity with humanity, specifically contrasting the humble bending and writing with the authoritative standing and speaking of Jesus.⁶⁴ (35) In a short treatment of PA, Strachan inappropriately claims unimportance for Jesus’ writing: ‘The marks He made were meaningless.’⁶⁵ This, however, is clearly not the opinion of the narrator, as the discussion below will demonstrate. (36) A final solution to the issue of Jesus’ writing is that of U. Becker, who simply chooses to remove it from the text as a later interpolation that is actually antithetical to the

⁶⁰ Aichele, ‘Reading,’ 364.

⁶¹ Aichele, ‘Reading,’ 364.

⁶² Additionally, Aichele insists that one must move PA outside the canon in order to understand the inability of Jesus’ writing to denote, since the canon attempts to provide a collective meaning to texts such as PA which resist such an effort (366–7). Historically, however, this is unfruitful, since PA was added to GJohn once the fourfold canon had already formed. (Graham N. Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], 85, dates the acceptance of the fourfold canon ‘to the period shortly before 150,’ which is the earliest date suggested for the inclusion of PA.) As noted in the main text, however, I readily admit that the historical and exegetical concerns of the present study are not the concerns of Aichele’s study.

⁶³ Jeffrey A. Staley, ‘Reading “This Woman” Back into John 7:1–8:59: *Liar Liar* and the “Pericope Adulterae” in Intertextual Tango,’ in *Those Outside: Noncanonical Readings of the Canonical Gospels* (eds. George Aichele and Richard Walsh; London: T & T Clark, 2005), 107: ‘If Jesus can stoop so low as to write in the gritty dirt of ordinary human experience, then perhaps we should feel empowered to lift up popular culture’s allusions to the Christian canon into serious dialogue with postmodern rhetoric and textuality.’ Cf. Patricia Klindienst Joplin, ‘Intolerable Language: Jesus and the Woman Taken in Adultery,’ in *Shadow of Spirit: Postmodernism and Religion* (eds. Philippa Berry and Andrew Wernick; London: Routledge, 1992), 232.

⁶⁴ Mark Atherton, ‘A Place for Mercy: Some Allegorical Readings of “The Woman Taken in Adultery” from the Early Middle Ages (with Particular Reference to Bede, the *Heliand*, and the Exeter Book),’ in *Ciphers in the Sand: Interpretations of the Woman Taken in Adultery (John 7.53–8.11)* (eds. Larry J. Kreitzer and Deborah W. Rooke; BS 74; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 2000), 115–6.

⁶⁵ R. H. Strachan, *The Fourth Gospel: Its Significance and Environment* (London: SCM Press, 1941), 204.

flow of the pericope (though he does recognize that the repeated writing in John 8.8 is ‘ohne Beispiel und rätselhaft’).⁶⁶ This, however, solves nothing, as it only pushes the question one step further: If the writing was not original, what did the interpolator think he was adding?

2. A New Direction

What should one do in the face of these interpretive possibilities? At least one scholar has surrendered to the mystery of the writing: ‘I do not know why he wrote on the ground, and, what is more, I do not believe that anyone else does either.’⁶⁷ A number of scholars have taken a similarly appropriate first step by refocusing on what the text actually provides its reader(s)—‘There is simply not enough evidence to support conclusively any of these surmises; and one cannot help but feel that if the matter were of major importance, the content of the writing would have been reported’;⁶⁸ ‘The text itself, however, draws attention only to the fact of Jesus’ writing, not the substance of what is written’;⁶⁹ ‘The various suggestions made about this have yielded no conclusive result and for an obvious reason. On this point, the text is totally silent! Certainly, had the content of Jesus’ writing been a crucial element in this narrative, John would naturally have specified what it was’;⁷⁰ ‘If what Jesus wrote in the dirt was so integral to the resolution of the conflict, the exact words would have been recorded in the narrative’;⁷¹ ‘If the narrator had considered its content at all important he would have provided it.’⁷² These statements are correct, and thus modern exegetes may eliminate any proposed solutions that seek to illuminate the pericope with information the text itself does not provide.⁷³ This includes many of the previously mentioned thirty-six, the most extreme of which are

⁶⁶ Ulrich Becker, *Jesus und Die Ehebrecherin: Untersuchungen zur Text- und Überlieferungsgeschichte von Joh. 7:53–8:11* (BZNW 28; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1963), 87.

⁶⁷ James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John: Volume 2: Christ and Judaism, John 5–8* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 605.

⁶⁸ Brown, *Gospel According to John I–XII*, 334.

⁶⁹ O’Day, ‘John 7:53–8:11,’ 632.

⁷⁰ Hodges, ‘Woman Taken in Adultery: Exposition,’ 45.

⁷¹ Young, ‘“Save the Adulteress!”,’ 69.

⁷² Lincoln, *Gospel According to Saint John*, 532.

⁷³ Kruse, *Gospel According to John*, 200, is incorrect to conclude further that ‘what he wrote plays no part in the story.’ The rest of this thesis, and Chapter Eight in particular, will argue the exact opposite.

those of Derrett and Aus, who invent wholesale the verse references for each act of writing.⁷⁴ Explaining the act of writing in such a manner sacrifices what the text does provide for what it does not and also carries an underlying assumption that the text itself is not quite sufficient.⁷⁵

Second, one should not separate Jesus' act of writing on the ground from its narrative context within PA, and for that one must take note of John 8.7 and 8.8. In John 8.7, Jesus stands to speak to the Pharisees when they persist, and utters the oft-quoted, 'The one of you who is sinless among you, let him be the first one to throw a stone upon her.' Jesus here references the Jewish tradition found in Deuteronomy 13.9 and 17.7, which states that the witness should throw the first stone, followed by 'all the people' (see John 8.2—*pa/j o` la o, j*).⁷⁶ He adds the condition, however, that the first one should also be *avnama, rthto j* ('without sin'). Importantly for the present study, Jesus ignores their request to interpret the Law. *Though he is asked to interpret Moses concerning the sin of the adulteress, he actually does not offer an interpretation.* 'Jesus maintained silence on the main issue,' and instead turned the situation into a question of the scribes and the Pharisees' ability to judge rather than the adulteress' punishment.⁷⁷

Noting the narrative context, then, the third guide for exegetes is to recognize that perhaps even more perplexing than Jesus' act of writing in John 8.6 is the second reference to this same action in John 8.8—'And again, bending down, Jesus wrote on the ground.' Schnackenburg, who supports the interpretation that Jesus writes in fulfilment of Jeremiah 17.13, says, 'Once again, it is the word as such which is effective; but if we are right in our interpretation of the gesture, then this second writing on the ground says it again, and more clearly than ever: God writes sinners in the dust.'⁷⁸ It is not readily obvious how this second writing is 'more clear' than the first, however. If the point is to state that Jesus wrote in the ground in order to

⁷⁴ Derrett, 'Law,' 19–24; Aus, *Caught in the Act*, 28–34.

⁷⁵ Likewise, O'Day, 'John 7:53–8:11,' 636: 'Attempts to find the interpretive key to John 7:53–8:11 in something outside the given story reveal a dissatisfaction with and distrust of the story as it is written. Such interpretations constitute a refusal to take the text seriously.'

⁷⁶ Brown, *Gospel According to John I–XII*, 334; Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 311; Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to St. John*, 2.166; Ben Witherington, III, *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1995), 364.

⁷⁷ Barrett, *Gospel According to St. John*, 591.

⁷⁸ Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to St. John*, 2.166–7.

write sinners in the ground, what does 8.8 contribute to the scene that 8.6 does not? Was the job unfinished—a few sinners left unwritten because of their own interruption? Lindars is more cautious: ‘This is an essential feature of the story, and again it is unnecessary to speculate what he might have been writing.’⁷⁹ Yet, the second clause in this statement merely avoids the weight of the first. That it is unnecessary to speculate on *what* was written does not explain exactly *how* and *why* the action is ‘an essential part of the story.’ To the contrary, the two actions are ‘más importantes.’⁸⁰ Minear poignantly observes, ‘Because these actions twice interrupt the flow of the debate, unnecessarily separating answers from questions, interpreters must ask why the narrator took listeners . . . through such a gratuitous detour unless there was a desire to call attention to deeper meanings in the double gesture.’⁸¹

The dual action of Jesus’ writing in John 8.6 and John 8.8 is an intercalation, or sandwich. The Jesus tradition, especially the author of the Gospel of Mark, certainly used the sandwich technique.⁸² Though not nearly as complex, this sandwich in PA functions similarly to the fig tree sandwich in Mark 11.12–24, where the interior of the sandwich (the Temple Incident) is interpreted by the exterior (the destruction of the fig tree as a result of failure to bear fruit). In John 8.5, the scribes and the Pharisees ask Jesus to interpret Torah. However, Jesus offers only a pithy statement with no explicit connection to adultery in Torah; then writes again. Thus, surrounding this (non)interpretation on both sides are Jesus’ actions of writing. In Chapter Eight I will suggest that Jesus writing in the ground with his finger likely is an allusion to the finger of God (Exodus 31.18). However, most important to note presently—because it is the unique contribution of the narrator to the scene—is that *Jesus envelopes his ‘interpretation’ of Torah in writing.*⁸³

⁷⁹ Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 311.

⁸⁰ Rius-Camps, ‘Origen Lucano,’ 171.

⁸¹ Minear, ‘Writing,’ 24. Cf. also Crossan, *Finding*, 100.

⁸² Most recently, Craig A. Evans, ‘How Mark Writes,’ in *The Written Gospel* (eds. Markus Bockmuehl and Donald A. Hagner; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 138–47, argues not only for the presence of Markan sandwiches, but that one can read the entire Gospel of Mark as a sandwich. On Markan sandwiches, see also David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 51.

⁸³ Given this emphasis in PA, one can only consider it ironic that in a collection of essays on PA entitled *Ciphers in the Sand* (eds. Larry J. Kreitzer and Deborah W. Rooke), not one of the essays actually deals with the ciphers in the sand.

The departure of the Jewish leadership from the scene confirms that the writing is a narratorial focus. John 8.9 states that they leave after *hearing* (avkou, santej) what Jesus said, even though the narrator breaks the action to tell the reader that Jesus continued to write in 8.8.⁸⁴ In 8.7, the scribes and the Pharisees persistently question Jesus while ignoring his writing, in 8.9 they leave once he speaks. The scribes and the Pharisees, therefore, are altogether indifferent to Jesus' writing.⁸⁵ The narrator is the only person in the scene who finds Jesus' writing significant, and he finds it particularly significant since the writing surrounds Jesus' climactic answer in the debate and thus suggests that the oral answer should be understood in terms of writing. Furthermore, the narrator cares only *that* Jesus wrote, not *what* he wrote. In this sense, the narrator is not only making his own unique contribution (of emphasis) to PA, but to the Jesus tradition as a whole, for *this constitutes the sole claim within the canonical or non-canonical Jesus tradition that Jesus could write*. Scholars rarely remark on this unique phenomenon in the Jesus tradition and altogether fail to expound the significance of this claim even when they do note it.⁸⁶

Compounding the curiosity of this scholarly neglect is that many scholars, in their rehearsals of proposed solutions to what Jesus wrote, recognize Jerome's solution (the sins of the accusers), Manson's solution (the legal sentence), or Derrett's solution (passages from Exodus), but fail to note that these solutions would require a literate Jesus.⁸⁷ Despite this, John 8.6, 8 is the highest claim of literacy for Jesus in the Jesus tradition.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Toensing, 'Divine,' 165n.15, claims the reference to 'hearing' in 8.9 'completely de-emphasize[s]' Jesus' writing. To the contrary, while it may demonstrate that *the scribes and the Pharisees* 'de-emphasize' Jesus' writing, it also demonstrates that the narrator *emphasizes* the writing.

⁸⁵ *Contra* Lincoln, *Gospel According to Saint John*, 532–3, who claims that the dramatic pause of Jesus' second act of writing allows his words to sink and thus causes the elders to exit. There is no indication in the narrative that Jesus' writing contributes to the elders' exit.

⁸⁶ Those who note that this is the only place Jesus is said to write (but fail to expound upon it) include: Aichele, 'Reading,' 359; Bengel, *Gnomon*, 2.350; Bernard, *Gospel According to St. John*, 2.719; Bruce, *Gospel of John*, 413; Farrar, 'Gospel,' 37; Gench, *Back*, 138; Everett Falconer Harrison, 'The Son of God among the Sons of Men: VIII. Jesus and the Woman Taken in Adultery,' *BSac* 103 (October–December 1946): 431; Johnson, 'Re-examination,' 220; Joplin, 'Intolerable,' 235; Kelber, *Oral and Written*, 18; Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel*, 347; Alan Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus* (BS 69; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 188; Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (Perennial Library; New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 220; Toensing, 'Divine,' 165n.15.

⁸⁷ Nor do these scholars acknowledge this significance when making the initial proposal. Additionally, there is manuscript evidence for just this understanding of Jerome's proposed solution.

3. History of Research Conclusion

I conclude this history of research by briefly drawing attention to the implications of the previous argument. By focussing on the information that the text does provide the reader (rather than enlisting speculations from outside the text), and paying attention to the narrator's perspective, a new possibility for understanding Jesus' actions of writing appears—the main point of the narration of these actions is to claim that Jesus was grapho-literate. The strength of an interpretation of Jesus' writing as a claim for literacy vis-à-vis other options is that it incorporates the other elements of the narrative in a manner that explains the presence of the dual action of writing, the particular narratorial emphasis on the writing, and, as Chapter Six especially will show, makes sense of PA's Johannine context. If nothing else, the wide array of proposed interpretive solutions to Jesus' actions demonstrates that nothing near a consensus yet exists and there is thus ample room for consideration of a new possibility.

Maurice A. Robinson, 'Preliminary Observations Regarding the *Pericope Adulterae* Based upon Fresh Collations of Nearly All Continuous-Text Manuscripts and All Lectionary Manuscripts Containing the Passage,' *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 13 (2000): 54, records, 'The members of the Patmos family [e.g., U] have the addition ... enoj ekastou taj amartiaj... [but] they then change the oi de akousantej of 8.9 into kai anaginwskontej—certainly a more appropriate reading, considering the altered text.' This family of manuscripts claims Jesus wrote something the accusers then read!

⁸⁸ Luke 4 also portrays a literate Jesus, capable of public reading; however, in the ancient context reading and writing were separate skills, with writing being far the less common. See Chapter Three. A possible exception here is the 'supraliteracy' demonstrated by the child Jesus in *Inf. Gos. Thom.* This text, however, never actually narrates Jesus' use of reading or writing, only his superior knowledge of 'letters' when compared to his teachers.

Chapter Two

Speaking of Writing:

katagra, fw and *gra, fw* in Hellenistic, Jewish, and New Testament Contexts

‘That He actually wrote words, and did not merely, as some suggest, go through the mere semblance of writing, may, I think, be assumed from the phrase employed.’¹

Chapter One concluded its rehearsal of the confusing array of suggested interpretations of Jesus’ writing by proposing that the significance of John 8.6, 8 lies in its *claim* that Jesus was grapho-literate, a unique phenomenon in Jesus tradition. Can the verbs used in John 8.6, 8 bear the weight of this interpretation, however? The acts themselves are described with the verb *katagra, fw* in John 8.6 and *gra, fw* in John 8.8, with the narrator clearly intending the same action with the respective verbs (Codex D uses the compound in 8.8 as well). The former of these verbs is a *hapax legomenon* in the NT and will be discussed first.² The present chapter will present various referents of *katagra, fw* in Greek literature, demonstrating that the word could refer to literary and non-literary acts. But the central argument is that in the immediate context of PA, *katagra, fw* most likely denotes the same action as *gra, fw* does in the NT—‘writing’ alphabetized letters capable of being read.³ What follows will therefore lay the groundwork for proceeding to investigate why an early Christian would want to portray Jesus as grapho-literate.

I. katagra, fw Diachronically

¹ Farrar, ‘Gospel,’ 37 (emphasis original).

² This chapter will be the first sustained treatment of *katagra, fw* in John 8.6.

³ ‘Alphabetized’ is a potentially misleading adjective, since some languages use alphabets that do not technically consist of letters; for example, Egyptian hieroglyphs are mostly pictographic. However, this is not the case for the languages under discussion here, and thus I will use ‘alphabetized writing’ and ‘lettered writing’ interchangeably below in order to denote the difference between the writing of language and, for example, doodling.

The most recent consideration of Jesus' writing in PA in terms of literacy is Foster's 'Educating Jesus: The Search for a Plausible Context.'⁴ Foster expresses doubt as to whether one can definitely claim that John 8.6 represents lettered writing by Jesus due to the use of *katagra, fw* in Greek literature.⁵ For example, he references Pausanias' *Description of Greece* (ca. 174 CE), which states that a certain Parrhasius 'designed' (*katagra, yai*) reliefs on a shield.⁶ Additionally, Foster includes the reference to Menedemus the philosopher (300 BCE) having shamed someone publicly when he 'drew a cartoon on the ground' (*die, grafen eivj tou; dafoj*), though, as Foster notes, this is a different compound verb.⁷ The examples cited by Foster are apparently from those provided by BDAG,⁸ and based on these he concludes,

Thus, despite the attempts of numerous commentators to specify what Jesus "wrote" in the sand, the wider usage of the term *katagra, fw* shows that it is impossible to know whether the marks in the sand were in fact making use of letters or if it was some other marks that Jesus made.⁹

Foster is not alone in doubting that *katagra, fw* in John 8.6 implies an act of literacy. Bernard, writing in 1928, claims on the one hand, 'That he was able to write may be assumed,' but, on the other hand, 'It is probable that on this occasion He was only scribbling with His finger on the ground.'¹⁰ Prior to Bernard, Deissmann had rejected the former supposition as well: 'Jesus of Nazareth is altogether unlitrary. He never wrote or dictated a line.'¹¹ In the translation of the

⁴ Paul Foster, 'Educating Jesus: The Search for a Plausible Context,' *JSHJ* 4.1 (2006): 7–33.

⁵ Foster, 'Educating Jesus,' 19–21; he ignores John 8.8.

⁶ Foster, 'Educating Jesus,' 21. See Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.28.2 (Jones, LCL). For date, see Jones, introduction to *Description of Greece* by Pausanias, ix.

⁷ Foster, 'Educating Jesus,' 21. Note, however, that in a variant in Symmachus' late second-century version of the LXX at Ezekiel 8.10, *katagra, fw* replaces *diagra, fw*. See discussion of this passage on p.45.

⁸ BDAG, '*katagra, fw*,' provides the definitions 'write' and 'draw figures.' Other lexical definitions are as follows: LSJ—'scratch, lacerate . . . 2. engrave, inscribe . . . 3. draw in outline, delineate . . . 4. describe . . . 5. paint over . . . II. fill with writing . . . 2. register, record . . . 3. summon by a written order . . . 4. convey, transfer by deed . . . 5. devote'; *EDNT*—'write; record; sketch, draw.'

⁹ Foster, 'Educating Jesus,' 21. Note that Foster's statement focuses on the writing in terms of the *content* rather than the action itself. Chapter One argued that the action itself *is* the point.

¹⁰ Bernard, *Gospel According to St. John*, 2.719.

¹¹ Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan; rev. ed.; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1927), 245; see also p.246.

revised German edition of this work, published in 1927, Deissmann's English translator clarified, 'The writing in John viii. 6, 8 was not literary.'¹² Several more recent scholars take this line as well. Millard states that John 8.6 'need not mean writing words.'¹³ In a footnote, Dunn makes a similar claim: 'It is hardly clear that John 8.6, 8 indicates an ability to compose in writing.'¹⁴ Evans claims that even if John 8.6 is historical, 'it tells us nothing certain about Jesus' literacy.'¹⁵ In reference to their claim that 'the Gospels of the New Testament do not indicate that Jesus wrote anything down,' McDonald and Sanders allow the letters to the seven churches in Revelation as an exception but state, 'The secondary text of John 7:53–8:11, even if genuine, would hardly qualify as a written document.'¹⁶ Similarly, Krueger claims Jesus 'never writes' and dismisses the evidence of John 7.53–8.11 because it is 'a later insertion.'¹⁷ Meier has a subsection on Jesus' illiteracy and assesses John 8.6, John 7.15, and Luke 4.16–30. He initiates his discussion with perhaps the most sceptical statement of John 8.6: 'Indeed, of the three texts put forward as proof [of Jesus' literacy], John 8:6 is for all practical purposes useless.'¹⁸

These scholars' caution is not without warrant (although one should note here that PA's textual status is irrelevant for whether it claims Jesus could write). Though removed from a NT context, further non-literary examples of *katagra*, *fw* exist. For example, Herodotus (b. 484 BCE), clearly straying from his area of specialized knowledge, uses the verb while asserting that a lioness gives birth to only one cub in her life because the birthing process damages her uterus:

This is the reason of it:—when the cub first begins to stir in the mother, its claws, much sharper than those of any other creature, tear the uterus, and as it grows, much more does it scratch and tear (*katagra*, *fwn*),

¹² Strachan, trans., *Light from the Ancient East*, 245n.3.

¹³ Millard, *Reading and Writing*, 178.

¹⁴ James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Christianity in the Making 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 314n.284.

¹⁵ Evans, 'Context,' 16.

¹⁶ Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders, introduction to *The Canon Debate* (eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 9, 9n.20, respectively.

¹⁷ Derek Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 7.

¹⁸ John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (3 vols.; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1.268.

so that when the hour of birth is near seldom is any of the uterus left whole.¹⁹

However, literary definitions also appear in this broader context. Whitacre cites Zenon Papyrus 59 (256 BCE) as supporting evidence for the idea that Jesus wrote a condemnation of the adulteress' accusers in John 8.6, for in this papyrus *katagra, fw* appears with 'the sense of writing out an accusation against someone.'²⁰ And by the second century BCE, the *Histories* of Polybius (208–126²¹) provides clear examples of *katagra, fw* referring to alphabetized writing, including a verse of poetry written on a wall,²² the terms of an alliance,²³ and a list of hostages.²⁴ On the other side of the first century, in a contract for the sale of a slave in the Egyptian village of Kellis, P.Kill.G. 8 (dated 362 CE), *katagra, fw* references the written terms of the agreement which appear in the papyrus.²⁵

Cumulatively, these random examples plucked from Greek texts demonstrate only that it would be as mistaken to suggest that the interpolator of PA could not have meant alphabetized writing as it would be to suggest that the interpolator of PA definitely did mean alphabetized writing. All the previously discussed attestations are chronologically removed from a NT setting by two to four centuries, and some are from contexts wholly unrelated to the occurrence of *katagra, fw* in PA, which deals specifically with the Law of Moses and scribal Jewish culture. A narrower and contemporaneous field of usages is needed, one which takes seriously the differences in various stages of the Greek language and therefore the particular context of *katagra, fw*'s appearance in John 8.6. For, most important in understanding John 8.6 is how the verb was employed in the surrounding socio-historical milieu of the gospels. The remainder of this chapter will survey *katagra, fw* synchronically in a number of texts and *gra, fw* specifically in the NT.

¹⁹ Herodotus, *Hist.* 3.108.4 (Godley, LCL).

²⁰ Whitacre, *John*, 207.

²¹ H. J. Edwards, introduction to *The Histories* by Polybius (LCL; London: William Heinemann, 1922), vii, x.

²² Polybius, *Histories* 5.9.4–5.

²³ Polybius, *Histories* 29.3.6.

²⁴ Polybius, *Histories* 29.3.6.

²⁵ P.Kill.G. 8.3. For text, see K. A. Worp, ed., *Greek Papyri from Kellis: I* (Dakle Oasis Project Monograph 3/Oxbow Monograph 54; Oxford: Oxbow, 1995), 29–30. The Oxyrhynchus cache provides numerous similar examples to P.Kill.G. 8, and these will be discussed below in the synchronic analysis.

2. *katagra, fw Synchronically*

In order to present usages of *katagra, fw* that are closer (chronologically and socio-culturally) to the first-century setting depicted in John 8.6, I will here discuss Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Plutarch, the Oxyrhynchus papyri, Josephus, and the LXX. (Pausanias' non-literary usage of *katagra, fw* ca. 174 CE has already been noted.) This data pool will thus roughly span the first century BCE to the early second century CE, though the Oxyrhynchus and LXX evidence reaches well into the fourth century CE, which is the very latest point at which an interpolator could have inserted PA into GJohn. The LXX evidence covers the time period under consideration indirectly. It is a third-century BCE translation and thus only directly reflects Greek usage of that time period. However, both Jews and Christians continued to read it as Holy Scripture during the first centuries of the Common Era. That is, while early Christians would not have conversed in LXX Greek, they certainly would have utilized it when they read their Greek translations of the Hebrew holy texts, as, for example, the many allusions to LXX texts in the Pauline letters and other Christian texts demonstrate. This makes the LXX particularly important and it will therefore receive the most detailed attention.

2.1 *Diodorus Siculus*

Diodorus Siculus, who began working on his history ca. 60 BCE, employs *katagra, fw* on a number of occasions, often to describe the action of enrolling into military service.²⁶ Four examples will suffice here. In *Library of History*, Diodorus says that, in military zeal, some Romans in Athens 'voluntarily went to the generals and urged that they be enrolled (*katagra, fein*) among the soldiers.'²⁷ On another occasion he uses the verb similarly: 'Hermocrates, Sicanus, and Hercleides . . . enrolled (*kate, grafon*) soldiers.'²⁸ In a third example, Diodorus tells his reader that 'Hannibal . . . gathered together both the mercenaries he had collected from Iberia and the soldiers he had enrolled (*katagrafe, ntaj*) from Libya.'²⁹ Fourth, Diodorus says, 'As soon as Lysander assumed the command he

²⁶ For date, see C. H. Oldfather, introduction to *Diodorus Siculus* (LCL; London: William Heinemann, 1933), viii.

²⁷ Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 13.2.2 (Oldfather, LCL).

²⁸ Diodorus Siculus, *Library* 13.4.1 (Oldfather, LCL).

²⁹ Diodorus Siculus, *Library* 13.54.1 (Oldfather, LCL).

enrolled (*kate, grafe*) an adequate number of soldiers from the Peloponnesus.³⁰ These four examples are four of many in Diodorus that demonstrate that in a military setting in the first century BCE, *katagra, fw* can signify an official agreement to enroll into military service. These examples do not provide information as to whether part of this agreement would have included writing in the form of a contract or signature, though it is reasonable to assume that it did, especially given the formal contractual meaning of ‘registration’ for *katagra, fw* in the Oxyrhynchus papyri, to be discussed below.

2.2 Strabo

Strabo (64/63 BCE–ca. 21 CE³¹) provides an example of *katagra, fw* in a formal political setting similar to Diodorus Siculus. Describing Ephesus, he writes, ‘There was a senate, which was conscripted (*katagrafome, nh*).’³² This participial use of the verb describes the compulsory or official nature of the position of the senate members in Ephesus. Though neither Diodorus nor Strabo explicitly mention lettered writing in their usages of *katagra, fw*, this is the case in examples from Plutarch.

2.3 Plutarch

Plutarch (d. ca. 120 CE³³), a contemporary of the biblical authors, uses *katagra, fw* twice in his *Lives* in contexts that describe lettered writing. Speaking of Solon, he says, ‘All his laws were to have force for a hundred years, and they were written (*kategra, fhsan*) on “axones,” or wooden tablets, which revolved with the oblong frames containing them.’³⁴ In this example, the writing of the laws on wooden tablets complements their long-term efficacy. In another example, Plutarch uses *katagra, fw* to describe the coded writing of a dispatch scroll: ‘They write (*katagra, fousin*) what they wish on the parchment, just as it lies wrapped about the “scytale”; and when they have written their message, they take the parchment off

³⁰ Diodorus Siculus, *Library* 13.70.1 (Oldfather, LCL).

³¹ J. R. S. Sterrett, introduction to *The Geography of Strabo* (LCL; London: William Heinemann, 1918), xiv, xxi.

³² Strabo, *Geogr.* 14.1.21 (Jones, LCL).

³³ Bernadotte Perrin, introduction to *Plutarch’s Lives* (LCL; London: William Heinemann, 1914), x.

³⁴ Plutarch, *Sol.* 25.1 (Perrin, LCL).

and send it.’³⁵ According to Plutarch, in this instance *katagra, fw* describes writing that occurs on a scroll and contains a message. These two examples from Plutarch’s *Lives* provide evidence that, in some cases in the first century, *katagra, fw* unambiguously referred to alphabetized writing. The Oxyrhynchus papyri add further such evidence.

2.4 The Oxyrhynchus Papyri

The Oxyrhynchus papyri include a wealth of evidence for the present issue, for in this collection *katagra, fw* occurs multiple times, attesting the literary convention of ‘registering’ official agreements.³⁶ That this administrative task is accomplished via written agreements on papyrus provides conclusive evidence of *katagra, fw* referring to literary activity. Pringsheim observes both the antiquity of this convention and its literary nature: ‘*Katagrafh*, has a history of about a thousand years. In the first Ptolemaic period . . . it is an official register. In the second, Ptolemaic and Roman, period it is probably the public document for the transfer of ownership, and *katagra, fein* the act of writing such a document.’³⁷ Similarly, Taubenschlag states:

The deed had to be drawn up by public functionaries. *Katagra, fein* means, therefore: to convey by a public deed. This public deed was considered the formal prerequisite for the passing of the title. The corollary of the verb *katagra, fein* is the term *katagrafh*, =transfer, conveyance by a public deed or the deed itself (the deed of conveyance by which the conveyance used to be executed).³⁸

Taubenschlag also grants the definition of ‘record’ to *katagra, fw* in the specific context of the Oxyrhynchus material.³⁹ Six Oxyrhynchus papyri will here provide

³⁵ Plutarch, *Lys.* 19.6 (Perrin, LCL).

³⁶ For a general discussion of literacy as reflected by Greek Egyptian papyri, see William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 276–81.

³⁷ Fritz Pringsheim, *The Greek Law of Sale* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1950), 145–6.

³⁸ Raphael Taubenschlag, *The Law of Greco-Roman Egypt in the Light of the Papyri 332 B.C.–640 A.D.* (2d ed.; Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1955), 322.

³⁹ Taubenschlag, *Law*, 323n.13 (continuing on p.324). Taubenschlag provides a full history of *katagra, fw* and its different meanings for different types of sales at different periods. Important for the current discussion is that in all the various usages of the verb, it denotes a written document transferring ownership; the precise social value and function of the document, along with who is responsible for it, differs with reference to time periods and social locales.

evidence for the claims of Pringsheim and Taubenschlag in the time frame of the present synchronic analysis (first century BCE to early second century CE): P.Oxy. 268, P.Oxy. 242, P.Oxy. 328, P.Oxy. 327, P.Oxy. 2856, P.Oxy. 472.

The first two papyri contain forms of *katagra, fw* in passages that the editors supply. P.Oxy. 268 (58 CE), the repayment of a dowry, includes a clause written in a second hand that stands in the left margin of the papyrus perpendicular to the main text.⁴⁰ At the end of the second line of this clause, which references its secondary nature, the editors have supplied the phrase [*gegonui, a | katagrafh/ |*] ('being written' or 'being registered'). Obviously, it is not certain that this phrase was original to the document, but that the editors supply it shows their confidence that, in Oxyrhynchus in 58 CE, *katagra, fw* denoted this type of formal literary activity.

P.Oxy. 242 (77 CE) begins with a clause supplied by the editors, instructions from Claudius Antonius to the *agoranomus*, instructing the official to 'register a sale/purchase.'⁴¹ Like P.Oxy. 268, P.Oxy. 242 demonstrates both the editors' confidence that such a passage would occur at the beginning of this type of document, but also the interchangeable nature of the prepositional prefixes of *gra, fw* cognates in attesting this convention. The editors of the Egypt Exploration Fund collection of Oxyrhynchus material provide the verb *avnagra, fw* for 'register,' while the editors of the Duke Databank of Documentary Papyri provide *katagra, fw* for 'register.'⁴² According to Pringsheim, 'It is not a question of great importance whether this act was called *avnagrafh*, or *katagrafh*,.'⁴³ Thus, P.Oxy. 242 demonstrates that, for the editors of both these collections, *gra, fw* compound verbs denote an official written request to register a transaction.

P.Oxy. 328 and P.Oxy. 327 are the first certain first-century examples of *katagra, fw* in the literary convention of registration of a transaction. P.Oxy. 328 (ca. 85) is 'the beginning of a notice to the *agoranomus* from Theon . . . to register

⁴⁰ For text, see Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, eds., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri II* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1899), 248–9.

⁴¹ [*avna, grayon wvnh.n*] For text, see Grenfell and Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri II*, 188–9.

⁴² [*katagrayon wvnh.n*] Accessed online: www.perseus.tufts.edu. This exact phrase occurs in P.Oxy. 2856 (91/2 CE), discussed below.

⁴³ Pringsheim, *Greek Law of Sale*, 146.

(katagra, fein) a sale.’⁴⁴ P.Oxy. 327 (late first century) is ‘a notice sent to the agoranomus by a person whose name is lost and oi` me, toc(oi) to register (katagra, fein) the sale of the half share of a slave Dioscorus.’⁴⁵ Interestingly, for both of these texts the editors state that this is the ‘same formula as ccxli–iii.’⁴⁶ This editorial comment is interesting because a comparison with P.Oxy. 241–243 again reveals the variety of compound forms of gra, fw used for ‘to register.’ As mentioned above, the editors of the Egyptian Exploration fund collection, Grenfell and Hunt, supply avnagra, fw in the formulaic introduction in P.Oxy. 242. P.Oxy. 241 and P.Oxy. 243 both seek to ‘register’ a mortgage, and in these cases the verb is again avnagra, fw. To demonstrate further variety, P.Oxy. 244–P.Oxy. 248 have the same formula, but in these manuscripts the compound verb is avpogra, fw. One may posit the content of the sale as accounting for the respective verbs, but P.Oxy. 244–P.Oxy. 246 use avpogra, fw for the ‘registration’ of a sale or transfer of cattle while P.Oxy. 247 and P.Oxy. 248 use the same verb for the ‘registration’ of property. Additionally, though a third-century document, P.Oxy. 1268 uses apogra, fw as a finite verb and katagra, fw as an adjectival participle with little distinction between the two in a phrase that could be translated ‘I register the registration’: ‘avpogra, fomai h]n kategra, fhn.’⁴⁷ Thus, there is (at present) no easily discernible significant difference in these compound verbs. Important for this study, however, is that all three compound verbs (katagra, fw, avnagra, fw, and avpogra, fw) are used for the same social function of official written registration of a transaction, and P.Oxy. 328 and P.Oxy. 327 are late first-century attestations of this usage of katagra, fw.

P.Oxy. 2856 (91/92 CE) is another notice sent to an *agoranomus* at Oxyrhynchus, instructing him to ‘register a sale/purchase’ (katagra, yon wvnh, n).⁴⁸ This text is thus similar to the supplied line of the aforementioned

⁴⁴ Grenfell and Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri II*, 307.

⁴⁵ Grenfell and Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri II*, 307.

⁴⁶ Grenfell and Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri II*, 307.

⁴⁷ P.Oxy. 1268.4. For text, see Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, eds., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri X* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1914), 196.

⁴⁸ P.Oxy. 2856.3–4. For text, see Gerald M. Browne et al., eds., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri XXXVIII* (Graeco-Roman Memoirs 54; London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1971), 75.

P.Oxy. 242, and justifies the editorial decision to supply *katagra, fw* in its introductory formula.

P.Oxy. 472 (ca. 130 CE) ‘contains the concluding part of a speech in defence by an advocate.’⁴⁹ The speech, which defends a certain Hermione against a charge of poisoning, discusses the theft of a mortgage (*pi, stij*). Here *katagra, fw* is again used similarly to the above examples.

If they say that the slave Smaragdus has disappeared being himself accused of having stolen the mortgage—he only asserts that a mortgage was made in order that it might be stolen; for it is impossible for that to have been stolen which neither ever existed at all nor could exist, nor can a mortgage have been drawn up (*gegr[a,]fqai*), since neither the buyer knew how to write (*gra, mmata h; |dei*)⁵⁰ nor the present defendant Hermione, nor does a stranger when another woman is registered (*katagrafei, shj*) as mortgagee himself issue a deed of mortgage.⁵¹

This example may provide an explanation of the difference between the simple and compound verbs: *gra, fw* is used in order to reference the act of originally creating (‘drawing up’) the mortgage while *katagra, fw* seems to reference the document once its official status has been recognized/granted. This again seems to be the sense of *katagra, fw* when it is used twice just after the previous passage: ‘For persons who are registered as mortgagees (*tw/n . . . katagrafe, ntwn*) have only their name inserted in deeds and do not claim the property which has been registered in mortgage (*w-n kategra, fhsan*). . .’⁵² Thus, this passage may offer a plausible explanation for the difference between the simple and compound verb. The compound refers to the status granted to the mortgage once it is officially ‘filed,’ its having-been-registered, while the simple verb denotes the mechanical process of creating the document in the first place.

Two caveats are appropriate at this point. First, the explanation proposed here in reference to P.Oxy. 472 implies differences of degree rather than type, as both verbs refer to literary activity and written texts. That is, one cannot argue that

⁴⁹ Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, eds., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri III* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1903), 152. For text, see p.152–4.

⁵⁰ See Chapter Six for discussion of this phrase in John 7.15.

⁵¹ P.Oxy. 472.14–20 (Grenfell and Hunt).

⁵² P.Oxy. 472.23–25 (Grenfell and Hunt).

katagra, fw, in this example, refers only to official status and is therefore unrelated to the actual writing of alphabetized letters. For, one cannot ‘register’ (*katagra, fw*) a mortgage without first ‘drawing [it] up’ (*gra, fw*). Nor, according to the speaker/author, can an individual consider him- or herself ‘registered’ (*katagrafei, shj*; 472.19) in the mortgage unless the letters of his or her name have been written upon the document. Second, one should be hesitant to apply this relationship between the simple and compound verb to other types of literature. In some contexts, such as the LXX occurrences of both verbs to be discussed shortly, such a distinction between the two does not exist.

Though these Oxyrhynchus papyri fall within the boundaries of the present synchronic analysis of *katagra, fw* (first century BCE to early second century CE), they are not the only ones that attest this formal use of the verb or its nominal cognate *katagrafh, .* The third-century P.Oxy. 1268 was mentioned previously, in which a participial form of *katagra, fw* is the direct object of the verbal action of *avpogra, fw*. It is just one of many texts demonstrating that this formal literary use of *katagra, fw* extended well into the fourth century.⁵³ This survey of Oxyrhynchus papyri therefore demonstrates the official or formal usage of *katagra, fw* in first-century Egypt, a usage which is unquestionably literary in its nature.

2.5 *Flavius Josephus*

⁵³ In addition to P.Oxy. 1268, see P.Oxy. 1634 (222 CE); P.Oxy. 3365 (241 CE); P.Oxy. 1636 (249 CE); P.Oxy. 1562 (276–282 CE); P.Oxy. 4360 (ca. 295–325 CE); P.Oxy. 1704 (298 CE); P.Oxy. 1268 (third century CE); P.Oxy. 1703 (third century CE); P.Oxy. 2723 (third century CE); P.Oxy. 4359 (324 CE); P.Oxy. 3758 (325 CE). Additionally, for the same conventional use of *katagra, fw* in a different Egyptian community, see P.Kell.G. 8 (ca. 362 CE).

There are at least two attestations of *katagra, fw*/*katagrafh, .* that depart from the ‘registration’ or ‘conveyance’ usage that is dominant in the Oxyrhynchus cache. First, according to Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, eds., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri XIV* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1920), 153, in P.Oxy. 1697 (242 CE), the phrase ‘*katagra[fh/j telw/n...*’ means ‘the customary 12 drachmae for Alexandria’ and would thus technically refer to an official payment, though this could refer to the fact that a ‘registered’ document prescribes this amount. Second, P.Oxy. 2276 (late third century–fourth century CE) attests *katagra, fw* in a phrase that may simply mean generic writing, as in writing a letter, since the aorist participial form apparently denotes that the author will send something after it is written or registered, and since *gra, fw* is used in the former sense in the next full sentence. The Greek reads, ‘... *k]atagra, y, ntoj kai ... ousper kai. pe, m[yei pro, j] se. kavgw h' para. bohqw/n tou/ D[i]du, mo[u] [fula]keitw/n auvtou/ e[tero, n ti katalabw/mai []w soi,*’ Leaving the first phrase untranslated, the editors translate the second as ‘... I also will write to you if I happen to learn something else from the assistants of Didymus.’ For text and translation, see E. Lobel et al., eds., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri XX* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1952), 158–9.

Closer to the Jewish setting of biblical texts, Josephus (37–ca. 101 CE) employs *kata, grafw* on two occasions with meanings that differ from those suggested by the Oxyrhynchus papyri, and indeed differ from each other.⁵⁴ In *Ant.* 6.66, Josephus describes the election of Saul as king over Israel and states that Samuel wrote an account of the story in a book: ‘The prophet, having put in writing (*katagra, ya j*) for them all that should come to pass, read it in the hearing of the king and then laid up the book in the tabernacle of God, as a testimony to after generations of what he had foretold.’⁵⁵ This passage not only denotes alphabetized writing, but also demonstrates the official nature of written texts due to their ability to witness to future generations, a prominent theme in some of the LXX passages discussed below. Josephus also provides a quite different example of *katagra, fw*, one where the verb refers to an action akin to embroidery. In *J.W.* 5.214, he describes the curtain in the temple. ‘On this tapestry was portrayed (*katege, graptō*) a panorama of the heavens, the signs of the Zodiac excepted.’⁵⁶ Josephus, therefore, shows the semantic range of *katagra, fw* with two different uses of the verb.

These examples from Diodorus, Strabo, Plutarch, Oxyrhynchus, and Josephus are comprehensive neither of the time period nor the individual authors (except Josephus). They are a sample, demonstrating that, though *katagra, fw* could describe varying situations or actions, it also frequently described alphabetized writing. As we now move into biblical literature by considering the use of *katagra, fw* in the LXX and then *gra, fw* in the NT, we will see that the semantic range for these verbs in these corpora is more restricted.

2.6 LXX

Moving into scriptural literature, while taking a step back chronologically from Josephus, the LXX uses *katagra, fw* on eleven occasions: Exodus 17.14; Exodus 32.15; Numbers 11.26; 1 Chronicles 9.1; 2 Chronicles 20.34; 1 Esdras 2.12;

⁵⁴ The writings of the other prominent Jewish contemporary of the NT authors, Philo of Alexandria, do not attest *katagra, fw*.

⁵⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 6.66 (Thackeray, LCL).

⁵⁶ Josephus, *J.W.* 5.214 (Thackeray, LCL). In the Penguin Books edition, Williamson translates this phrase as ‘worked in the tapestry. . . .’ Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, ed., *A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus* (4 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1973–1983), 2.436, defines *katagra, fw* in this passage as ‘to portray (by an embroidered or woven pattern).’

Job 13.26; Sir 48.10; Hosea 8.12; 1 Maccabees 9.22; and 1 Maccabees 14.26 [ET 14.27].⁵⁷ A twelfth occurrence of the verb appears in a variant at Ezekiel 8.10 found in Symmachus' second-century CE revision of the LXX.

2.6.1 *Exodus 17.14*

The first LXX occurrence of *katagra, fw* is in Exodus 17.14, which Propp describes as 'the Bible's first reference to literacy.'⁵⁸ The Lord commands Moses to write (*kata, grayon*) a memorial following the destruction of the Amalekites. The underlying Hebrew for this command is *btok*, and this is the first of eight passages where the LXX translators employ *katagra, fw* for the Hebrew *bt;K'*, which BDB renders 'to write.'⁵⁹ This is clearly a literary situation, given that Moses is to write *evn bibliw|*. However, that the writing is *eivj mnymo, sunon* ('for a remembrance') also points to the cultural value of the sense of permanence associated with writing.⁶⁰ The same connections between lettered writing and permanence are also present in Exodus 32.15.

2.6.2 *Exodus 32.15*

Exodus 32.15 is the most important LXX use of *katagra, fw* for a proper understanding of John 8.6 and 8.8, and thus for this thesis. In this passage, Moses returns from the mountain with the two tablets, being sent back down by God due to the Israelites' worshipping of the golden calf. Verse 15b uses *katagra, fw* to describe the tablets as *pla, kej li, qinai katagegramme, nai evx avmfote, rwn tw/n merw/n auvtwn, e;nqen kai. e;nqen h=san gegramme, nai* ('stone tablets having been written from/on both their sides, having been written from here and from here').⁶¹

⁵⁷ Foster, 'Educating Jesus,' 20–21, incorrectly claims *katagra, fw* appears three times in the LXX. Likewise, Johan Lust et al., eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (rev. ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), 311, reference only eight occurrences. HRCS (2d ed.), 'katagra, fein,' 730, correctly lists the twelve occurrences.

⁵⁸ William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18: A New Translation and Commentary* (AB 2; New York: Doubleday, 1999), 619.

⁵⁹ BDB, 'bt;K'', 507.

⁶⁰ See also, for example, the immutable nature of King Darius' decree given its written status in Daniel 6.8, 12–13, 15, or Pilate's words in John 19.22.

⁶¹ LXXRH and LXXS follow fourth-century B and tenth-century witnesses 115 and 392 in reading *katagegramme, nai ... gegramme, nai*; LXXG follows fifth-century witnesses A and F in reading *gegramme, nai* in both locations.

Several issues demand attention in this verse. First, what makes this verse most pertinent for John 8.6, 8 is not that *katagra, fw* appears here, but that it appears in parallel to *gra, fw*, strongly resembling the synonymous use of both verbs in PA, where the compound also precedes the simple verb.⁶² As in PA, in Exodus 32.15, both verbs mirror each other in form (in Exodus 32.15 as perfect passive participles, in PA as imperfect active indicatives) and both clearly describe the same verbal action.⁶³ Further, though the compound form of the verb appears in the LXX of Exodus 32.15, the Greek participles translate the exact same underlying Hebrew participle—*~ybituK*. (providing the second passage where *katagra, fw* translates *bt; K'*).⁶⁴ Additionally connecting this verse to PA is that in both the Mosaic Law is under discussion—Exodus 32.15 describes the transcribing of the Law, while in PA Jesus is asked to interpret it. Chapter Eight will treat further the importance of these similarities for understanding Jesus' actions in PA. But it is important now to note that beyond these similarities, the fact that Exodus 31.18 states God wrote the 'two tablets of testimony' *tw/| daktu, lw|* ('with the finger')—the same phrase that appears with *katagra, fw* in John 8.6—demonstrates further why Exodus 32.15 demands special attention when considering the presence of *katagra, fw* (and *gra, fw*) in PA.

Second, returning to the purposes of the present chapter, *katagra, fw* in Exodus 32.15 most certainly refers to alphabetized writing. Not only does Exodus 24.12 have God claiming that he wrote (*e; graya*) 'the law and the commandments' (*to.n no,mon kai. ta.j evntola, j*) on the tablets, 34.1

J. Philip Hyatt, *Commentary on Exodus* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1971), 307, notes, 'This is the only passage which gives the information that the tables were written on both sides.' Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus* (trans. Sierd Woudstra; 3 vols.; HCOT; Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 3.653–4, lists several interpretations, including rabbinic, of the dual writing, and rightly concludes: 'At any rate, the tablets, unlike the bull image, are not made by human hands (cf. 32:4, 20, 31, 35). The divine origin of the writing is specially spelled out (cf. 31:18).'

⁶² In both Exodus 32.15 and John 8.6, 8, it is possible that the authors use the simple verb second because they are following the Greek practice of dropping the prepositional prefix with the second compound verb (see A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* [New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914], 563). Most important for this thesis, however, is not why the second verb drops the prepositional prefix, but that it does and that John 8.6, 8 seems to follow Exodus 32.15 deliberately. See further Chapter Eight.

⁶³ Differently from the appearance of the verbs in PA, in Exodus 32.15 the occurrence of *gra, fw* is part of a (pluperfect) periphrastic construction.

⁶⁴ Regarding *gra, fw* in the LXX, Gottlob Schrenk, '*gra, fw, graph,, kt1,*' *TDNT* 1.742, says, 'It is almost always used for *bt; K'* ... or for *bt; K..*'

portrays God as telling Moses that he will write on the second pair of tablets the ‘words’ or ‘sayings’ (r`h, mata) that were on the first pair.

Third, like in Exodus 17.14, the writing is intended to connote a sense of the permanence. As just mentioned, 32.15a describes the tablets as ‘the two tablets of testimony’ (ai` du, o pla, kej tou/ marturi, ou), demonstrating that they are to witness to what God had spoken to Moses on Sinai (Exodus 31.18). They are the engraved memorial of God’s instructions to Israel, with the stone location of the message ensuring its permanence and importance in the life of Israel.⁶⁵ The significance attached to ‘that which is written’ (in the Jewish context meaning the Holy Scriptures), derives from the social recognition of the permanence of writing (in this case heightened by its stone location).

Thus, like its occurrence in Exodus 17.14, in Exodus 32.15 *katagra, fw* denotes alphabetized writing. Further, the writing in both verses is specifically described as simultaneously functioning as a permanent reminder of God’s activity.

2.6.3 Numbers 11.26

The appearance of *katagra, fw* in Numbers 11.26 resembles its use in the writings of Diodorus Siculus, where the verb denotes a formal registration. This verse describes two prophets named Eldad and Medad as among those who had been ‘registered’ or ‘enlisted’ (*katagegramme, nwn*) but ‘had not gone to the tent.’ This is similar to the modern notion of ‘signing up,’ for example, for military service. Though enlisting primarily describes the act and not a specific literary activity (for example, the signing of one’s name or the filling out of forms), it does assume that understanding and most likely derives from it.⁶⁶ Dorival cites the previous two LXX passages in his discussion of the current one: ‘Dans le Pentateuque, il a le sens de consigner des événements dans un livre (*Ex 17, 14*) ou de mettre par écrit sur un support les paroles de quelqu’un (*Ex 32, 15*).’⁶⁷ There is warrant for viewing these

⁶⁵ Cf. H. Gregory Snyder, *Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World: Philosophers, Jews and Christians* (RFCC; New York: Routledge, 2000), 62, who, in reference to the inscription of Diogenes of Oenoanda and Trajan’s Column, says, ‘In both cases, the reader is impressed, almost bludgeoned with a “rhetoric of stone” that conveys a magnificent weight and monumentality.’

⁶⁶ In Christian tradition Eldad and Medad are treated as literate prophets. See Herm. Vis. 2.3.3–4.

⁶⁷ Gilles Dorival, introduction to *La Bible d’Alexandrie: Les Nombres* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1994), 89.

three passages in light of each other as well, since *katagra, fw* in Numbers 11.26 translates *bt; K'* as it does in Exodus 17.14 and 32.15 as well. Discussing the Hebrew, Milgrom states, ‘Hebrew *ba-ketuvim* is equivalent to *mispar shemot*, “list of names” (1:2).’⁶⁸ Thus, Dorival is correct when he offers just this interpretation of the Greek: ‘Ainsi, par l’emploi du verbe *katagráphein*, la LXX suggère que les noms d’Eldad et Môdad ont été mis par écrit sur une liste figurant dans un registre.’⁶⁹

2.6.4 1 Chronicles 9.1

First Chronicles 9.1 also uses *katagra, fw* in a formal sense, and also references alphabetized writing. The first eight chapters of 1 Chronicles consist of Israelite genealogies, ‘listing the residents of Jerusalem who are at the heart of the people of Israel.’⁷⁰ The first verse of 1 Chronicles 9 is a concluding statement to this list, indicating where one can find these genealogies. The genealogies are written (*katagegramme, noi*) in the book (*evn bibli, w|*) of the Kings of Israel and Judah. Here the underlying Hebrew is again *bt; K'*, with the Greek participle translating the Hebrew participle *~ybiWtK..*

2.6.5 2 Chronicles 20.34

Second Chronicles 20.34 continues the occurrences of *katagra, fw* that clearly refer to alphabetized writing and mention the royal annals of the kings. Like Exodus 32.15, this verse contains a parallel use of *gra, fw*. In 2 Chronicles 20.34, however, *gra, fw* occurs prior to *katagra, fw*, when the author states that the rest of the deeds of Jehosaphat are written (*gegramme, noi*) in the deeds/annals (*lo, goij*) of Jehu son of Hanani. The author then uses the compound form of the verb to state that this text was written/recorded (*kate, grayen*) in another text, the Book of the Kings of Israel.

In 2 Chronicles 20.34, then, both *katagra, fw* and *gra, fw* describe writing, and this verse thus confirms their parallel meanings when they occur together. As opposed to their parallel occurrence in Exodus 32.15, however, the underlying Hebrew verbs are not the same here. The deeds of Jehosaphat are

⁶⁸ Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers rbdmb: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 90. Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 214–5, is more cautious.

⁶⁹ Dorival, introduction, 89.

⁷⁰ Steven L. McKenzie, *1–2 Chronicles* (AOTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 109.

~ybiWtK. ('written'; LXX gegramme, noi) in the deeds/annals of (yreb.diB.; LXX lo, goi j) Jehu son of Hanani. The author then states that the deeds of Jehu hl' []ho ('were contained'⁷¹; LXX kate, grayen) in the book (rp, se-l[]; LXX bibli, on) of the Kings of Israel.⁷² Does the use of katagra, fw for this latter action perhaps reflect the different locations of the writing, or a perceived difference in formality between deeds/annals and a book/scroll? The verb hl' [] ('be included in' here, otherwise 'going/coming up') occurs with rp, se ('book/scroll') only two other times in the Hebrew Bible—2 Kings 12.11 and Ezra 7.6—which both deal with scribes but not writing, using hl' [] in its traditional sense of 'going/coming up.' First Chronicles 27.24 may be of help since it contains a use of hl' [] that is similar to 2 Chronicles 20.34. This passage states that, though Joab son of Zeruiah had started to count the men under twenty in Israel, God's wrath prevented his completion and thus this number was not 'included' or 'inserted' (hl' []) in the annals of (yreb.Di) the days of King David. In this verse, then, hl' [] occurs with rb'D', so it seems that hl' [] can refer to the insertion of pre-existing information or a previous text into either deeds/annals (1 Chronicles 27.24) or a book/scroll (2 Chronicles 20.34). It may be that the LXX translators were attempting to reflect this special meaning of 'inclusion' or 'insertion' for hl' [] by using katagra, fw in 2 Chronicles 20.34. Against this, however, the translators do not use katagra, fw for hl' [] in 1 Chronicles 27.24, where again numbers fail to be included in King David's official records (instead using katecwri, sqh).

The precise difference between bt;K' and hl' [] when they refer to what one does with official records is not exactly clear, then. This is tangential to the present argument, however, and thus it will suffice to note that in 2 Chronicles 20.34

⁷¹ William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 273, offers this definition for the hophal perfect, citing this verse as its reference. BDB, 'hl[],' 750, defines this form of the verb as 'be taken up into, inserted in,' and also cites this verse as the only reference. McKenzie, *1–2 Chronicles*, 297, renders it 'taken up.'

⁷² Note that the LXX translator has changed the passive hophal hl' []ho to an active aorist kate, grayen. Thus, while the Hebrew reads that the deeds of Jehosaphat were written in the deeds of Jehu, 'in the book of the Kings of Israel,' the Greek technically reads that the deeds of Jehosaphat were written in the deeds of Jehu, 'who wrote the book of the Kings of Israel' (o] j kate, grayen bibli, on basile, wn Israhel). It could, therefore, be that the compound verb emphasizes authorship while the simple verb just prior emphasizes the text that is written. This is somewhat implausible, however, since this distinction is communicated fully by the shift in voice; what the prepositional prefix adds is not clear.

both Hebrew words represent action done to or with texts that contain alphabetized writing. And for the LXX translators of 2 Chronicles 20.34, both *katagra, fw* and *gra, fw* denote alphabetized writing as well.

2.6.6 *1 Esdras 2.12*⁷³ (ET 2.16)

In 1 Esdras 2.12–26 (ET 2.16–30), which ‘telescopes’ Ezra 4.6–24, King Cyrus has allowed Babylonian exiles to return to Jerusalem in order to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.⁷⁴ When the work begins, however, Shimshai the scribe and several others living in Samaria decide to warn Cyrus about the history of the Jews and the problems they have posed to foreign rulers, encouraging him not to allow them to rebuild their city and the Temple. According to the text, they conveyed this information to Cyrus when they wrote (*kate, grayen*) a letter. This is a further example of Greek translators using *katagra, fw* in order to translate the Hebrew *bt; k'* (see Ezra 4.7). The letter itself follows in the text, and thus there can be no doubt that 1 Esdras 2.12 is another LXX use of *katagra, fw* referencing alphabetized writing.

⁷³ I have here followed the LXXRH enumeration for the Greek text. The passage is 1 Esdras 2.15 in the LXXG and LXXS.

⁷⁴ The term ‘telescope’ is from Zipora Talshir, *1 Esdras: A Text Critical Commentary* (SBLSCS 50; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature: 2001), 106.

2.6.7 Job 13.26

In Job 13.26, Job is reprimanding his friends and states, ‘For you write (kate, grayaj) evil things against me. . . .’ This is an ambiguous statement that does not specify the content of the writing beyond ‘evil things’ (kaka,) or the location of what is written. This may indeed be a reference to evil words which were written, but this verse does not provide the clarity of some of the previous passages. The context does not preclude this understanding of the verb, though, and given the metaphorical significance of alphabetized writing, the more plausible conclusion is that this does envisage words that are written. Strengthening this possibility is the fact that here *katagra, fw* again translates the Hebrew *bt; K'*, as it does in previous examples that clearly refer to alphabetized writing.

2.6.8 Sirach 48.10

Sir 48.10 is another LXX passage that primarily calls attention to the metaphorical value of written language and provides the eighth LXX usage of *katagra, fw*. In a passage extolling Elijah, the author refers to him as (translated literally), ‘The one who is written/recorded (o` katagrafei, j) in reproofs for times, to calm wrath before anger, to turn back (the) heart of a father to (his) son, and to establish the tribe of Jacob.’ Once more, *katagra, fw* is the Greek translation for the Hebrew *bt; K'*.⁷⁵ Like Job 13.26, this passage does not state *what* is written or *where* it is written. Sir 48.10 primarily refers to the aforementioned sense of permanence associated with writing in that culture and thus the certainty that Elijah will in fact fulfil this prophecy.⁷⁶ This verse is thus the third LXX passage that refers to the symbolic significance of writing.

2.6.9 Hosea 8.12

Hosea 8.12 also references the surety of God’s written words. In this passage, God states that, though he may write down (*katagra, yw*) a multitude of

⁷⁵ For Hebrew text, see Pacratius C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text Edition of All Extant Hebrew Manuscripts and a Synopsis of All Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts* (VTSup 68; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 86; Israel Lévi, ed., *The Hebrew Text of the Book of Ecclesiasticus* (Semitic Study Series 3; Leiden: Brill, 1904), 67.

⁷⁶ Foster, ‘Educating,’ 21, assesses the passage: ‘This may refer to the notion that something written down cannot be altered, but the text gives little indication to decide whether *katagra, fw* refers, in this context, to writing using some form of alphabet, or is just a loose metaphor for an event that cannot be changed.’

precepts, it is to no avail for wilfully disobedient Ephraim.⁷⁷ Here *katagra, fw* again translates *בָּטָל; כָּל*, and that thus makes eight of the nine LXX citations of this verb that have underlying Hebrew texts, displaying the translators' affinity for connecting these two words. Also, Hosea 8.12 joins Exodus 32.15 in using *katagra, fw* to denote the literary activity of God himself.

2.6.10 1 Maccabees 9.22

The final two LXX appearances of *katagra, fw* both occur in 1 Maccabees and both refer to alphabetized writing. Similarly to GJohn's statement about Jesus at John 20.30, 1 Maccabees 9.22 states that Judas Maccabeus did many other things that were not included in the text: 'Now the rest of the acts of Judas . . . have not been recorded (*ouv kategra, fh*), but they were very many' (NRSV). Since the context makes clear that having not been 'recorded' means that Judas' other acts were not written in the present document, this is certainly another use of *katagra, fw* where the verb refers to lettered writing.⁷⁸

2.6.11 1 Maccabees 14.26 (ET 14.27)

First Maccabees 14.26 finds Judas and Jonathan dead, with their brother Simon ruling the people, having just confirmed an alliance with the Romans. The Jewish people are grateful for the leadership of the Maccabees and honour them by making a record of their rule on bronze tablets, mimicking the bronze tablets Rome had just sent to Simon. According to 1 Maccabees 14.18, the Romans *e;grayan* to Simon on bronze tablets (*de, ltoij calkai/j*). In response, in 14.26, the Jewish people *kate,grayan* about the Maccabees on bronze tablets (*de, ltoij calkai/j*) of their own and place them on Mount Zion.⁷⁹ The synonymous usage of *gra, fw* and *katagra, fw*, as in Exodus 32.15 and 2 Chronicles 20.34, makes

⁷⁷ Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets 1* (NIBCOT 17; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 70, claims this verse 'shows that there were already written traditions of the *tôrâ* in existence.'

⁷⁸ Jonathan A. Goldstein, *1 Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 41; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 375: 'This verse implies that our author based his narrative on written sources. The imitation formula of the books of Kings . . . befits a dynastic history.'

⁷⁹ LXXRH and LXXG read the plural *kate,grayan*, following A and B; LXXS follows A and 311 in reading the singular *kate,grayen*.

clear that *katagra, fw* here denotes alphabetized writing. The fact that the actual content of the writing appears in the text further confirms this point.⁸⁰

2.6.12 Symmachus' Ezekiel 8.10

In a variant found at Ezekiel 8.10 in MS 86 (Vatican 549, Codex Barberinus), a ninth/tenth-century witness to Symmachus' late second-century revision of the LXX, one finds a wholly unliterary usage of *katagra, fw*.⁸¹ Here the verb replaces *diagra, fw* and is used to describe the animals and beasts that Ezekiel sees 'carved' upon a wall in the Temple in Jerusalem, and thus is certainly not related to lettered script. This example demonstrates for LXX tradition what the previous sections of this chapter do as well for the Greco-Roman world—namely that other definitions for *katagra, fw* do indeed exist.

This concludes the LXX occurrences of *katagra, fw*, and given the amount of evidence and its importance, a few summary statements are in order. First, *pace* Foster, the preceding analysis demonstrates that the majority of the twelve LXX references to *katagra, fw* refer to lettered writing. Eight of these eleven make explicit the alphabetized nature of the writing, with three stating that it occurs in a book (Exodus 17.14, 1 Chronicles 9.1, 2 Chronicles 20.34) and two including the writing itself in the body of the text (1 Esdras 2.12, 1 Maccabees 14.26). Also, eight of the nine LXX passages that have an underlying Hebrew text use *katagra, fw* in order to translate the Hebrew *bt ; K'* ('to write'). In the other Hebrew Bible passage—2 Chronicles 20.34, where the underlying Hebrew is *hl' ['—bt ; K'* is still paralleled in the immediate context, which makes clear that written documents are in view.

Supplementing the LXX usages of *katagra, fw* that refer explicitly to alphabetized writing are three examples (Numbers 11.26, Job 13.26, Sir 48.10) that focus upon the metaphorical or symbolic meaning of what is written. Furthermore, Ezekiel 8.10 in Symmachus' LXX contains a clearly non-literary usage of *katagra, fw*. This occurrence of *katagra, fw* thus joins Josephus' *J.W.* 5.214 and Pausanias' *Descr.* 1.28.2 as synchronic evidence of non-literary usages of the verb.

⁸⁰ Goldstein, *1 Maccabees*, 501, claims, 'Our author used the document here as a source.'

⁸¹ Noted by Joseph Ziegler, ed., *Ezechiel* (LXXG 16.1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952), 119; HRCs, 730.

Thus, it seems that Greek authors could use *katagra, fw* to refer to both non-literary actions and the writing of alphabetized script. The LXX reveals a more restricted field of meaning, however, where the majority of its usages refer to literary activity.

Second, it is critical to note the significance of the *gra, fw* word group in Exodus, especially in the sections of that text which narrate the giving of the Law and the stone tablets. In this context, the *gra, fw* word group describes the transmission of God's words into stone, an act which Exodus 31.18 depicts the finger of God accomplishing. As I will argue in Chapter Eight, the author uses *gra, fw* words to differentiate between the contribution of Moses in the Israelite reception of the Law and the contribution of God. Exodus 32.15–16 makes this explicit, since it describes the tablets as 'the work of God.'⁸² These facts are important for interpreting John 8.6, 8, especially since the Jewish leadership's emphatic *su, in* John 8.5 invites Jesus to align himself against Moses.⁸³

Third, several passages use *katagra, fw* in parallel with *gra, fw*, displaying their overlapping semantic domains when used together. That is, the difference between the meaning of the compound verb and the simple verb is not clear in any of the uses that have been discussed. Given the preposition *kata, ,* one may think that it denotes 'writing against' or 'writing down' as opposed to 'writing' generally,⁸⁴ and some of the uses of the verb lend themselves to that interpretation. In the LXX, however, it would be inappropriate to draw too fine a distinction between the two, given some authors' use of both to represent the same action and/or translate the same underlying Hebrew verb (e.g., Exodus 32.15, 2 Chronicles 20.34,

⁸² See comments of Houtman, *Exodus*, 3.654; Hyatt, *Exodus*, 307.

⁸³ Shrenk, *TDNT* 1.743, sees in PA's use of *katagra, fw* and *gra, fw* the latter's 'original sense of engraving' (see also H. Hübner, 'grafh, , gra, fw,' *EDNT* 1.261). He parallels this with an explicitly literary use of *gra, fw* in Luke 1.63 where Zacharias writes/engraves John's name on a tablet with a stylus. As suggested here and developed in Chapter Eight, the proper interpretive background for John 8.6, 8 is God's engraving of the Decalogue.

Barrett, *Gospel According to St. John*, 591; and Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of John* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1980), 259, note the emphatic position of *su, ,*

⁸⁴ Cf. Rius-Camps, 'Origen Lucano,' 171, who includes a Spanish translation of Exodus 31.18 that translates *katagra, fw* as 'inscritas' (recorded/registered) and *gra, fw* as 'escritas' (written).

1 Maccabees 14.18/14.26).⁸⁵ Furthermore, the manuscript evidence attests the interchangeable nature of the two verbs. For example, while B (fourth century CE) attests *katagra, fw*, then *gra, fw*, in Exodus 32.15, A and F (both fifth century CE) attest *gra, fw* at both locations. Medieval MS 126 (1475 CE) exchanges *gra, fw* for *katagra, fw* at Exodus 17.14 as well.

This last point exposes a further problem with previous studies that focus primarily upon *katagra, fw* in PA.⁸⁶ Whatever one concludes about *katagra, fw* and its implications for literacy, there is still the matter of *gra, fw* in John 8.8 and the interpolator's parallel use of the two verbs. In the NT, *gra, fw* exclusively denotes alphabetized writing.

3. *gra, fw in the NT*

A diachronic analysis of *gra, fw* is beyond the scope of the present chapter, so I will here analyze *gra, fw* in the NT.⁸⁷ As already mentioned, PA's interpolator uses *katagra, fw* and *gra, fw* as synonyms in John 8.6 and 8.8. And since the canonical Jesus tradition is where the majority of interpreters throughout church history place PA, the canonical gospels and NT are the most appropriate context for analysing similar uses of *gra, fw*. I will first discuss uses of the formulaic perfect tense of *gra, fw* and then non-formulaic uses of *gra, fw*.

3.1 *gra, fw in the Perfect Tense in the NT*

The third person perfect passive of *gra, fw* occurs a total of sixty-seven times in the NT; and the participial perfect passive occurs an additional thirty-four times.⁸⁸ These particular manifestations of *gra, fw* are the most succinct demonstration of the principle already noted—lettered writing carries a social

⁸⁵ One should perhaps exercise caution in differentiating between the two verbs outside of a LXX context as well. The fourth-century P.Kell.G. 8 uses both *katagra, fw* (8.3) and *gra, fw* (8.10, 16) as synonyms to refer to the written nature of an agreement for the sale of a slave.

⁸⁶ Foster, 'Educating Jesus,' 19–21, and Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1.269, both marginalize John 8.8.

⁸⁷ Hübner, *EDNT* 1.261, claims *gra, fw* is the twentieth most common verb in the NT. For a detailed analysis of *gra, fw*, see Shrenk, *TDNT* 1.742–73.

⁸⁸ These statistics, and those in the following section, are drawn from 'gra, fw' in *Concordance to the Novum Testamentum Graece* (eds. Institute for New Testament Textual Research; 3d ed.; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1987), 343–8; and 'gra, fw' in James A. Swanson, John R. Kohlenberger III, and Edward W. Goodrick, eds. *The Exhaustive Concordance to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 179–81.

significance lending itself to metaphorical representation. The semantic content of the formula ‘it has been written’ refers to the Hebrew Scriptures that have been, through alphabetized letters, inscribed on scrolls and carry religious significance. Meanwhile, the perfect tense demonstrates a first-century conviction that *what* those letters contain has continuing relevance for the people for whom those are holy scrolls. When a NT author uses this particular form of the verb, he does so in order to impress upon his readers the authority of ‘a completed utterance that is definitive and permanently valid.’⁸⁹ This formulaic expression *gegra,ptai*, then, undoubtedly refers to alphabetized writing, and specifically to that which ‘is written’ in the Law.

3.2 Non-Formulaic Uses of *gra, fw* in the NT

Outside the 101 formulaic uses of *gra, fw* and its presence in PA, *gra, fw* occurs an additional ninety times in the NT and *in every occurrence it denotes alphabetized letters*. The majority of the uses occur in the context of that which is ‘written’ by Moses (e.g., Mark 10.5, Luke 20.28 et al.), that which is ‘written’ in the ‘Law and the Prophets’ (e.g., Luke 24.44 et al.), or epistolary address (e.g., 1 Corinthians 4.14, Galatians 1.20, 1 John 2.1 et al.). There are also less common occurrences of *gra, fw*; for example in the discussions of the inscription on the cross (Matthew 27.37, John 19.19–22) and the instruction of the unrighteous manager for his customer to ‘write’ his bill (Luke 16.6). Other occurrences of *gra, fw* are quite explicit about the nature of the writing. In 1 Corinthians 1.13, Paul states that he writes nothing else than what the Corinthians ‘read and understand’ (*avnaginw,skete...kai. evpiginw,skete*). The author of 3 John 13 says he has many things to write (in his letter), but is not willing to write them ‘with ink and pen’ (*dia. me,lanoj kai. kala,mou*; see also 2 John 12).

There may be an objection to understanding occurrences of *gra, fw* in Revelation as examples of lettered writing due to the symbolic nature of the apocalyptic text. However, the metaphor is specifically one of lettered writing. The prophecy that John must write in 1.3 is expected to be *read* and the *words* of the

⁸⁹ Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 45. Watson provides an insightful discussion of the difference between the ‘standard introductory formula’ of ‘as it is written’ and ‘alternative formulae’ in Paul on p.43–47.

prophecy are expected to be heard. Likewise, in 21.5, John is commanded to write ‘words’ (οἱ λόγοι). On several occasions John must write in a *book* or a book is the location of something that has been written (Revelation 1.11; 5.1; 20.12, 15; 21.27; 22.18, 19). The text also states at times that a *name* is what is written (3.12; 19.12, 16), sometimes on a stone (2.17) or forehead (14.1; 17.5). Finally, in 14.13 and 19.9, John is commanded to write entire phrases, which then follow in the text. Revelation, then, is a strong witness to the importance of literacy and textuality in early Christianity, as reflected by its various uses of *gra, fw*.⁹⁰

Though these examples are just a sample, they fully represent the NT as a whole, where all 190 uses of *gra, fw* outside of John 8.8 signify lettered writing, whether the verb is used to reference the Hebrew scriptures authoritatively, to express an authorial standpoint, or even as part of apocalyptic imagery.

In addition to this NT evidence, the majority of the twelve LXX occurrences of *katagra, fw* also signify lettered writing. Diachronic and synchronic analyses of *katagra, fw* yield alternative definitions for the verb, ranging from a scratching action (Herodotus) to embroidery (Josephus). However, while these alternative definitions are admitted as possibilities for understanding *katagra, fw*, the synonymous uses of the verb with *gra, fw* in PA and the LXX imply that the former may be understood in terms of the latter. And, as the survey demonstrated, within the immediate context of the canonical gospels and NT, *gra, fw* categorically refers to alphabetized writing.

4. Conclusion

In light of the usages of *katagra, fw* and *gra, fw* in the previously surveyed texts, the most natural reading of PA is as a claim for a grapho-literate Jesus. To claim such a thing for Jesus, whether a first-century claim or a fourth-century claim, is to attribute to him the highest gradation of literacy in the Greco-Roman literary environment. This is the topic of Chapter Three.

⁹⁰ Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 104, claims the author of Revelation may be ‘the most textually self-conscious Christian writer of the early period.’

Chapter Three

Writing and Gradations of Literacy

‘Scholars of antiquity have begun to accept what historians of the Middle Ages and early Modern Europe recognized some time ago, that writing and reading were not facets of an undifferentiated process and that interaction between them was less pronounced than it is today.’¹

‘We need to avoid assuming that reading and writing are inseparable skills.’²

‘I had been to school most all the time, and could spell, and read, and write just a little.’ (Huckleberry Finn)³

Within the Roman imperial context of Palestinian Judaism and the early Church, public education was not provided for everyone, private education was affordable for few, and rarely did a student progress into the upper echelons of the pedagogical process. In this environment, compositional writing was the highest gradation of literacy attainable.⁴ This reality runs counter to the modern mindset, where public education is normally available to all, reading and writing are pedagogically intertwined, and ‘literacy’ can broadly be defined as ‘capable of reading and

¹ Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 177.

² M. C. A. Macdonald, ‘Literacy in an Oral Environment,’ in *Writing and Ancient Near Eastern Society: Papers in Honour of Alan R. Millard* (eds. Piotr Bienkowski, Christopher Mee, and Elizabeth Slater; JSOTSup 426; London: T & T Clark, 2005), 52.

³ Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (ed. Peter Coveney; Penguin English Library; Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1966), 65.

⁴ The specific claim here is that compositional writing was the highest form of *literacy*, but not necessarily education. For those students who would proceed to the highest pedagogical rungs, further studies in rhetoric and philosophy would come after the acquisition of the literate skills. See M. L. Clarke, *Higher Education in the Ancient World* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1971); H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (trans. George Lamb; London: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 206–16.

writing.’ Some adjustment is required for modern readers to understand properly what it means, in a Roman imperial context, to claim that someone was capable of writing. This chapter will therefore survey the literacy landscape of Palestinian Judaism and the early Church with specific reference to the place of writing within that landscape. What follows functions here as an interlude between recognizing that *katagra, fw* and *gra, fw* in PA represent a claim that Jesus was grapho-literate (Chapter Two) and understanding the role of writing and scribal literacy in the power structures of Roman Judea, specifically as reflected in the NT (Chapter Four).⁵

This chapter will begin with a brief overview of the literacy landscape of the Greco-Roman world by focussing on two issues that complicate modern understanding of ancient literacy: multilingualism and gradations of literacy. The discussion will then proceed to consider the place of writing in the pedagogical process in three contexts pertinent to the present argument: Greco-Roman Egypt; Palestinian Judaism; and the early Church. Though important differences exist between the Egyptian context on the one hand, and both Palestinian Judaism and early Christianity on the other, this chapter will nevertheless observe the essential continuity between the literary environment reflected in PA (first century CE) and the literary environment in which PA was inserted into GJohn (at the latest, fourth century CE): compositional writing was a rarely possessed skill across the Roman Empire, both geographically and chronologically.⁶

1. The Literacy Landscape: Languages and Gradations

The standard work on literacy in the ancient world is that of Harris, where he claims: ‘The likely overall illiteracy level of the Roman Empire under the principate is almost certain to have been above 90%.’⁷ Although he allows that, in some areas of

⁵ For a thorough analysis of literacy in Roman Judea, see Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (TSAJ 81; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001); for the early Church, see Gamble, *Books and Readers*.

⁶ As noted in the Introduction of this thesis, the similarities between the literary environment of Jesus’ life and ministry and the literary environment of later Western Christians are crucial methodologically. PA reflects a first-century environment, yet its presence in GJohn, along with Jesus’ writing in John 8.6, 8, are not known until the fourth century. Many things changed in the intervening time period; literacy rates, for the most part, did not. Knowledge of how writing functioned in both contexts will provide background for understanding why later Christians would find a first-century grapho-literate Jesus instructive.

⁷ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 22. Harris’ important work generated multiple responses. See especially Mary Beard et al., *Literacy in the Roman World* (JRA Sup 3; Ann Arbor: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1991).

the world, literacy could have reached 30–40%, in the Roman Empire it is ‘unlikely that the overall literacy of the western provinces even rose into the range of 5–10%.’⁸ Studies of Jewish and Christian literacy have reached similar conclusions. Hezser’s recent analysis concludes that Jewish literacy was ‘well below’ the statistics offered by Harris.⁹ Gamble likewise references Harris’ statistics and states that there is no reason to think literacy in ‘the ancient church was any greater than that in the Greco-Roman society of which Christianity was a part.’¹⁰ The most recent studies in each of these contexts, therefore, unanimously affirm an overall low literacy rate.

The work of Hezser and Gamble, amongst others, reinforces for particular communities one of the central arguments of Harris’ original study, namely that nothing like mass literacy existed at any point in time anywhere in the ancient world. However, these statistics and general observations are only marginally helpful in dealing with particularities since, as many of these scholars recognize, ‘literate’ and ‘illiterate’ are notoriously vague adjectives.¹¹ This is especially the case in the social milieus of Roman Judea and early Christianity, where at least four issues complicate an academic understanding of ‘literacy’: the polyglot nature of the society(ies); the presence of gradations of literacy; the differences between reading and writing; and the phenomenon of sacred literacy. The first two of these issues will be treated generally below, while the third forms the bulk of the rest of this Chapter. The phenomenon of sacred literacy, with specific reference to Judaism and Christianity, is the topic of the next chapter.

⁸ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 329, 272, respectively.

⁹ Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 496. Meir Bar-Ilan, ‘Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries C.E.,’ in *Essays in the Social Scientific Study of Judaism and Jewish Society: 2* (eds. Simcha Fishbane, Stuart Schoenfeld, A. Goldschlaeger; New York: Ktav, 1992), 55, claims the literacy rate for first-century Palestinian Jews ‘was probably less than 3%.’ See also Meir Bar-Ilan, ‘Writing in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism Part Two: Scribes and Books in the Late Second Commonwealth and Rabbinic Period,’ in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. Martin Jan Mulder; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 33–34; Joanna Dewey, ‘The Gospel of John in Its Oral-Written Media World,’ in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition* (eds. Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 240. More recently, David M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 111–73, affirms Harris.

¹⁰ Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 5.

¹¹ See discussion in Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 1–7; Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 496.

1.1 Polyglot Societies

In the first century CE, at least five languages—Greek, Aramaic, Hebrew, Latin, and Nabatean—were present in Palestine.¹² The first three were commonly used, while the fifth is rarely attested epigraphically. Latin's use was limited to Roman officials, but Latin would become increasingly more common and eventually the primary language of the Roman Empire.¹³ John 19.20 demonstrates this multilingual situation by stating that the crucifixion inscription was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. The polyglot nature of early Christianity, then, complicates questions of literacy along lines of language and time. Gamble describes this scene: 'A Christian in first-century Palestine might have been thoroughly literate in Aramaic, largely literate in Hebrew, semiliterate in Greek, and illiterate in Latin, while a Christian in Rome in the late second century might have been literate in Latin and semiliterate in Greek but ignorant of Aramaic and Hebrew.'¹⁴

1.2 Gradations of Literacy

Gamble's description of the language scene alerts readers to the presence of gradations of literacy, making it possible for scholars to classify individuals and groups as 'literate,' 'semi-literate,' or 'illiterate.' It should be observed here that these classifications are for heuristic purposes only; they are not static categories and the boundaries between each group are blurred.¹⁵

¹² Millard, *Reading and Writing*, 84–153. See also Bar-Ilan, 'Writing,' 32; Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (2d ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 30–32; Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 188–90; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1.253–68; Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)* (trans. and eds. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), 2.20–28; and especially John F. A. Sawyer, *Sacred Languages and Sacred Texts* (RFCC; London: Routledge, 1999), 9–22, who catalogues a greater linguistic variety.

¹³ On Latin in the NT, see Millard, *Reading and Writing*, 148–53; cf. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1.257–8.

¹⁴ Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 3.

¹⁵ Menahem Haran, 'On the Diffusion of Literacy and Schools in Ancient Israel,' in *Congress Volume: Jerusalem 1986* (ed. J. A. Emerton; VTSup 40; Leiden: Brill, 1988), 83: 'Literacy is not a concept determinable by well-defined borders, as it is susceptible to variation in extent and level.'

1.2.1 'Literate'

Though obviously referring generally to the skills of reading and writing, a precise understanding of 'literate' is difficult. Aune provides a simple definition: 'Literacy basically refers to the ability to read and write, though there are obviously wide variations in reading and writing skills.'¹⁶ Gamble displays the reality of the variations that Aune notes, and demonstrates the inadequacy of such a vague definition: 'Literacy can be understood to mean anything from signature literacy (the ability to write one's name), to the capacity to puzzle out a brief and pointed message, to the functional literacy of craftspersons, to the developed skills of reading and comprehending lengthy literary texts.'¹⁷ Thus, while it is correct to see someone such as Luke as a 'literate' individual, the term could equally be applied to someone with far less literary capability. A precise definition of 'literate' depends not only upon the specific language being employed, but also the task to be accomplished. With regards to the ancient context, however, one can acquire a proper understanding of 'literate' individuals only in conjunction with an understanding of those who are 'semi-literate.'

1.2.2 'Semi-literate'

Harris defines 'semi-literates' as 'persons who can write slowly or not at all, and who can read without being able to read complex or very lengthy texts.'¹⁸ This category includes those individuals who may be 'literate' enough to sign their name or read signs, essentially enough to participate in the local economy to greater and lesser degrees.¹⁹ According to Lemaire, the average ancient Israelite falls in this category:

¹⁶ David E. Aune, 'Literacy,' in *The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 275–6.

¹⁷ Harry Y. Gamble, 'Literacy and Book Culture,' *DNTB* 644. Similarly, R. A. Derrenbacker, Jr., *Ancient Compositional Practices and the Synoptic Problem* (BETL 186; Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 22; John S. Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 167.

¹⁸ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 5. Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf, 'Literacy and Power in the Ancient World,' in *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (eds. Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 12, describe this as a 'sub-literary level.'

¹⁹ This ability is alternatively known as 'craftsman's literacy' (Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 7–8 and throughout) or 'tradesman's literacy' (Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1.262), in contrast to 'scribal literacy.'

Many Israelites doubtless learned rudimentary reading and writing, but for many this probably meant the ability to write their own names. The average villager probably would have had a difficult time composing a letter and probably did not have the technical skill to draft a will or a contract.²⁰

Youtie also places ‘slow writers,’ who will receive more attention below, in the category of ‘semi-literate.’²¹ Youtie presents one particularly instructive well-known example of a ‘slow writer,’ an Egyptian town clerk named Petaus. In his capacity as town clerk, Petaus was capable of copying his name and, at times, a brief formula, but nothing more.²² Interestingly, however, Petaus defended another town clerk, named Ischyron, against a charge of being an *avgra,mmatoj* (‘illiterate’) by pointing out that the clerk signed his documents. Youtie notes the irony of Petaus’ defense of the other town clerk: ‘He was in effect offering a defence not only of Ischyron, against whom the accusation had been directed, but also of himself and his own procedure.’²³ Thus, while Petaus certainly considered himself a literate individual—and would have pointed to his signature as evidence—Youtie can state, ‘He is not a writer at all in any proper sense, but a man copying a model or repeating

²⁰ André Lemaire, ‘Writing and Writing Materials,’ *ABD* 6.1005. Similarly, Aaron Demsky, ‘Writing in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism Part One: The Biblical Period,’ in *Mikra*, suggests that alphabetic knowledge may have been ‘more commonplace than is usually accepted’ (12), but sees ‘the practical skills of writing contracts and letter formulae’ (13) as later educational stages.

²¹ Herbert C. Youtie, ‘Brade,wj gra,fwn: Between Literacy and Illiteracy,’ *GRBS* 12.2 (1971): 239–61; repr. in *Scriptiunculae II* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1973). For ‘slow writers,’ see p.62 below.

²² Youtie, ‘Brade,wj gra,fwn,’ 239–41. Petaus demonstrates that he is capable only of rote copying when, e.g., while practicing his formula *Petau/j kwmogra(mmateu.j) evpide,dwka* (‘I, Petaus, town clerk, have submitted’), he omits the initial *epsilon* of the verb and then fails to include it from then on, evidencing his inability to read his mistake. (For discussion of other mistakes, see Thomas J. Kraus, ‘(Il)literacy in Non-literary Papyri from Graeco-Roman Egypt: Further Aspects to the Educational Ideal in Ancient Literary Sources and Modern Times,’ in his *Ad Fontes: Original Manuscripts and Their Significance for Studying Early Christianity—Selected Essays* [TENTS 3; Leiden: Brill, 2007], 118–20; repr. from *Mnemosyne* 53 (2000): 322–42.) The text is *P.Petaus* 121 (P.Köln inv. 328) and appears on Roger S. Bagnall, *Reading Papyri, Writing Ancient History* (AAW; New York: Routledge, 1995), xiii (discussed on p.24). The fullest discussion is that of Youtie, ‘Brade,wj gra,fwn,’ 239–44, but for other discussions of Petaus, see Cribiore, *Gymnastics*, 172; Raffaella Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (ASP 36; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 150–52; Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters*, 27–28; Ann Ellis Hanson, ‘Ancient Illiteracy,’ in *Literacy*, 171–4; Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 278; Robert A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (TCH 11; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 43–44; Kraus, ‘(Il)literacy,’ 113–26; Macdonald, ‘Literacy,’ 53; E. G. Turner, *Greek Papyri: An Introduction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 83; Herbert C. Youtie, ‘AGRAMMATOS: An Aspect of Greek Society in Egypt,’ in *Scriptiunculae II*, 621–2; repr. from *HSCP* 75 (1971).

²³ Youtie, ‘Brade,wj gra,fwn,’ 240.

it from memory.’²⁴ Literacy, it seems, is in the eye of the beholder. The example of Petaus as a ‘semi-literate’ individual provides important evidence for a correct understanding of ‘illiteracy’ as well.

1.2.3 ‘Illiterate’

The third group, described as ‘illiterate,’ is open to much misunderstanding. One ought not confuse this group with Ong’s category of ‘primary orality,’ which is ‘the orality of cultures untouched by literacy.’²⁵ Contrary to someone in a ‘primary orality’ environment, nearly every individual in the Roman Empire knew the impact of texts whether he or she could read, write, or neither.²⁶ Scholer states, ‘Although the Greco-Roman world was primarily an oral/aural culture, writing and written literature were a very significant part of the social fabric of life.’²⁷ Millard observes that, if nothing else, coinage, census-taking, and tax-collection would have brought written language before the citizens of the Empire.²⁸ Speaking more specifically about Roman Judea, Thatcher summarizes, ‘Even illiterate Jews from Palestine . . . recognized the role of writing in the systems of political and religious power that dominated their lives.’²⁹

There is both Jewish and Greco-Roman evidence for these scholarly opinions. One example from the Jewish context is Isaiah 29.12, which pictures illiterates being given reading material but responding that they cannot read it. A second, and

²⁴ Youtie, ,Brade,wj gra,fwn,’ 240. The example of Petaus provides Greco-Roman evidence for the apt statement of Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 7: ‘Literacy is not textuality. One can be literate without the overt use of texts, and one can use texts extensively without evidencing genuine literacy.’

²⁵ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (2d ed.; London: Routledge, 2002), 6.

²⁶ Beyond those cited below, see also Bar-Ilan, ‘Writing,’ 37; Demsky, ‘Writing,’ 15–16; Derrenbacker, *Ancient*, 29–30.

²⁷ D. M. Scholer, ‘Writing and Literature: Greco-Roman,’ *DNB* 1283. Similarly, Richard C. Beaton, ‘How Matthew Writes,’ in *Written Gospel*, 119; Larry W. Hurtado, ‘Greco-Roman Textuality and the Gospel of Mark: A Critical Assessment of Werner Kelber’s *The Oral and the Written Gospel*,’ *BBR* 7 (1997): 95; Sawyer, *Sacred Languages*, 45.

²⁸ Millard, *Reading and Writing*, 156, similarly 170; and A. R. Millard, ‘Literacy (Israel),’ *ABD* 4.338–9, where he catalogues epigraphic evidence that demonstrates a ‘widespread awareness of writing’ (339) for Ancient Israel. See also the example of the farmer who kept an archive though incapable of writing in Turner, *Greek Papyri*, 83.

²⁹ Tom Thatcher, *Why John Wrote a Gospel: Jesus—Memory—History* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 43; see also his earlier ‘Literacy, Textual Communities, and Josephus’ *Jewish War*,’ *JSJ* 29 (1998): 133–5.

perhaps more poignant, example is the Babatha cache from the Cave of Letters, which dates to the beginning of the Bar Kokhba revolt.³⁰ The manuscripts in the Babatha cache were still lying neatly when they were discovered, suggesting that someone had purposefully hidden them there, where archaeologists also discovered more than twenty skeletons. Presumably the documents were hidden for the same reason as the individuals—to prevent their destruction at the hands of the Romans. Significantly, the manuscripts consist of marriage deeds, court minutes, property registrations, loan records, etc., all of which belonged to Babatha daughter of Simeon, who was presumably one of the skeletons. In her final hours, in addition to herself and whichever loved ones who were possibly with her, Babatha attempted to preserve pieces of papyrus that documented her status as a twice-married land owner.³¹ This is all the more incredible given that Babatha was illiterate, not even capable of signing her name and thus certainly incapable of reading these texts for herself. For example, *P. Yadin* 22.34 contains a statement in Aramaic that the scribe ‘wrote by order of Babatha’ (atbb mwp l[tbtk).³² Similarly, *P. Yadin* 16.35 states in Greek that Judanes ‘wrote for her’ (e;graya u`pe.r auvth/j) and *P. Yadin* 15.35–36 states explicitly that Eleazar wrote on account of her illiteracy or ‘not knowing letters’ (dia. to. auvth/j mh. eivde, nai gra,mmata).³³ These examples are only a small sample from the Babatha cache. They are typical, however, and thus provide solid evidence from the Jewish context that not only were illiterates familiar with literacy, but could participate in the literate culture to such a degree that an individual might choose to die alongside texts he or she could not personally access.

A number of non-Jewish papyri contain similar statements to those in the Babatha cache—final lines stating that one person signed for another because the latter does not ‘know letters.’³⁴ For example, P.Oxy. 1636.45–46 (249 CE) reads

³⁰ Naphtali Lewis et al., eds., *The Documents from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters: Greek Papyri* (JDS; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1989), 4.

³¹ Lewis et al., *Documents*, 24.

³² For text, see Lewis et al., *Documents*, 99. The translation is that of Yadin and Greenfield and is found on p.100.

³³ For texts, see Lewis et al., *Documents*, 67, 60, respectively.

³⁴ Turner, *Greek Papyri*, 83, references a 1950 study by Rita Calderini on 1,738 uses of this formula. See recently, Thomas J. Kraus, “‘Uneducated’, ‘Ignorant’, or Even ‘Illiterate’? Aspects and Background for an Understanding of AGRAMMATOI (and IDIWTAI) in Acts 4.13,” in his *Ad Fontes*, 149–67; repr. from *NTS* 45 (1999): 434–49.

e;graya u`pe.r auvtou/ [mh. eivdo,toj g]ra,mmata.³⁵ P.Oxy. 472 (130 CE), further attests illiterate individuals participating in literate culture by demonstrating that the creation of legal documents required a high literate ability, but nonetheless were part of the daily life of individuals who did not possess such an ability. The recorded speech in the document defends the validity of an original contract by stating, ‘Nor can a mortgage have been drawn up, since neither the buyer knew how to write nor the present defendant. . . .’³⁶

In light of these examples, to describe an ancient person as ‘illiterate’ does not imply an individual’s unfamiliarity with writing, much less an inability to participate in the literary environment. Rather, to term someone ‘illiterate’ highlights the fact that such a person must engage the literary environment in a secondary manner, i.e. they must depend upon others in order to access and create texts for their use.³⁷ As Chapter Four will discuss, when it is sacred texts that the illiterate majority cannot access for themselves, tremendous power is inevitably granted to the literate minority.

Obviously, these three gradations of literacy were co-existent and fluid in the ancient context, serving more as a spectrum than three identifiably distinct social groups. Beyond this, as Gamble noted, a particular individual could simultaneously hold different literate competencies for different languages.³⁸ And even further, the perspective of the judge of literacy must play an important role in our assessment of the ancient evidence. An illiterate farmer may consider a town clerk capable of signature literacy to be ‘literate’; meanwhile the teacher of a philosophical academy or member of the royal court may consider the same town clerk to be ‘illiterate.’³⁹

³⁵ For text see, Grenfell and Hunt, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri XIV*, 44. *Inter alia*, see also P.Kell.G. 8.16 (362 CE). For examples of this exact same phenomenon in the early Church, see below p.81.

³⁶ P.Oxy. 472.16–18. For text, see Grenfell and Hunt, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri III*, 52.

³⁷ Thus, Cribiore, *Writing*, notes literates and semi-literates in Greco-Roman Egypt shared a ‘literate mentality’ (10) and that illiterates could participate in this vicariously (4). This situation gives rise to what Snyder, *Teachers*, 11, refers to as ‘text-brokers,’ who will receive more attention in the next chapter.

³⁸ Note also the position of Youtie, ‘AGRAMMATOS,’ 612, regarding statements of illiteracy in Greek papyri: ‘But when the Greek papyri describe people as literate or illiterate, they envisage only the ability to write Greek.’

³⁹ Though I make this point independently, Christine Schams, *Jewish Scribes in the Second Temple Period* (JSOTSup 291; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 136, remarks similarly and, on p.135, helpfully draws attention to Josephus, *J.W.* 1.479, which contrasts village scribes

Harris is therefore correct—‘In reality there are infinite gradations of literacy for any language.’⁴⁰ To complicate matters further, not only are there different gradations of literacy, but ‘literacy’ in the ancient world actually refers to two related but separate skills.

2. *Reading and Writing in Literate Education*⁴¹

The fact that a ‘semi-literate’ person could ‘write slowly or not at all’ implicitly displays a third layer to the literacy landscape.⁴² Contrary to modern mindsets, reading and writing in the ancient world were separate skills, and ability in one did not imply ability in the other. ‘Reading and writing are almost indivisible to us, but in many societies they are separate; people who read do not necessarily have the ability to write, their lives do not lead them into situations where writing is required.’⁴³ Writing is the higher level of literacy, and thus, not only can ‘a line be drawn between the literate and the illiterate population,’⁴⁴ a further line can be drawn between those who are grapho-literate and those who are not; i.e. those who can write in addition to being able to read.⁴⁵ Harris observes, ‘In some cultures non-writing readers, those possessed of one skill but not the other, have made up a broad spectrum.’⁴⁶ As anyone who has undertaken to learn a foreign language knows, the

(kwmw/n grammatei/j) with men in Herod’s court who had been educated carefully (pepaideume,nouj evpimelw/j). The village scribes are paralleled with slave girls.

⁴⁰ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 5.

⁴¹ I use the term ‘literate education’ to refer to the teaching and learning of reading and writing; that is, the acquisition of literacy.

⁴² Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 5.

⁴³ Millard, *Reading and Writing*, 154. *Inter alia* and those discussed below, see Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life* (updated ed.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 111–2, 122; Nicholas Everett, *Literacy in Lombard Italy, c. 568–774* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 6; M. D. Goodman, ‘Texts, Scribes, and Power in Roman Judea,’ in *Literacy and Power*, 99–100; Macdonald, ‘Literacy,’ 52–56, 65.

⁴⁴ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 3.

⁴⁵ Haran, ‘On the Diffusion,’ 83.

⁴⁶ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 5. Notably, on the same page Harris claims, ‘There is . . . no especial reason to think that those who could truly read and truly *not* write were numerous’ (emphasis original), but alludes to the difference between the two again when he claims the abundance of reading material in the ancient world ‘must not lead us to the assumption that the majority of city-dwellers were able to read for themselves . . . *still less to the assumption that they could write*’ (14; emphasis added; for similar statements see p.176, 275, 276, 302). Meier, *Marginal Jew* 1.255, reads Harris along these lines, and a number of other scholars implicitly reference the difference between reading and writing in the ancient world with similar statements; see, e.g., Gamble, ‘Literacy and Book Culture,’ 645; Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, 167–8; Lemaire, *ABD* 6.1005; Thatcher, *Why John Wrote*, xv.

level of engagement and competency one attains with that language (rudimentary, conversational, capable of academic reading, capable of academic writing, etc.), depends upon, among other things, the amount of previous education one has, leisure time that one can spend on such pursuits, expense of education, and/or the perceived economic or social benefit. This was as true in antiquity as it is today.⁴⁷

What follows will present evidence for compositional writing as the highest form of literacy in Greco-Roman Egyptian, Jewish, and early Christian contexts, primarily concentrating on how one acquired the skill of writing via formal and informal educational processes.⁴⁸ Some preliminary remarks are needed in this regard. Differences among these three environments and their educational emphases will be observed, but in general the education ‘system’ was similar across the Greco-Roman Empire.⁴⁹ Parents were primarily responsible for the education of their children and accomplished that task via public or private networks, though ‘public’ and ‘private’ here have different meanings from their modern ones.⁵⁰ If a father (or, in some instances, a mother⁵¹) was himself literate *and* had the time and resources to teach his child to read and write, he would. If he was either incapable (because of either his own limited literacy or because of lack of time or resources) or simply preferred, he had at least three other options to educate his child. First, he could hire a ‘private’ tutor to give individual attention to the child. Private tutors could also be employed in wealthy homes to teach slaves literate skills in order to have copyists on hand, and presumably a child could learn alongside others in this environment. Second, he could send his child to a ‘public’ elementary school. In no sense was this comparable to modern public elementary education. Each student brought wages to the teacher, schools met indoors and outdoors, and attendance was not compulsory.

⁴⁷ Gamble, ‘Literacy and Book Culture,’ 645. Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 280, discussing Roman Egypt, claims, ‘The decision whether or not to have a boy taught to read and write was strongly influenced by the expense—which would hardly need saying but for the persistent lack of realism on this subject among scholars.’ See Sir 38.24.

⁴⁸ Though these issues will be addressed below, it should be noted here that ‘compositional writing’ must be distinguished from the ability to copy, as also the ability to copy intricate literary texts must be distinguished from the ability to copy, for example, a contract.

⁴⁹ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 281; Theresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (CCS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 44–45, 66–67.

⁵⁰ See brief comments of Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters*, 55.

⁵¹ For example, Proverbs 31.1 (see Carr, *Writing*, 129–30). Also, in *Epistle* 107.4, Jerome instructs a mother regarding the teaching of letters to her daughter (cf. *Epistle* 128.1). Cf. *m. Qidd.* 4.13, which prohibits women from teaching scribes.

The availability of elementary school teachers was thus based upon ‘supply and demand,’ and therefore a child’s educational opportunities were strongly influenced by whether he or she lived in an urban environment with a concentrated population; i.e. whether there were enough other children who sought elementary education to warrant a teacher’s presence.⁵² Quintilian (first century CE) refers to the choice between these forms of public and private education:

But the time has come for the boy to grow up little by little, to leave the nursery and tackle his studies in good earnest. This therefore is the place to discuss the question as to whether it is better to have him educated privately at home or hand him over to some large school and those whom I may call public instructors.⁵³

A third option for education, especially when a specific type of literary training is the goal, such as an amanuensis or clerk, is apprenticeship.⁵⁴ The parent would send his child (or slave) to learn a particular trade and the necessary literary skills of that trade for an agreed-upon fee and time period. This would be another form of ‘private’ education.

The specific examples referenced below and the authors upon whom I will draw display the complex pedagogical system of the ancient world as it pertains to Greco-Roman Egyptian, Roman Judean, and early Christian contexts. The purpose of this discussion is to recognize that very few children progressed beyond the initial stages of education, and thus very few people in each of the discussed contexts attained the skill of compositional writing.⁵⁵ The rarity of the ability to write is critical for understanding the interpretive authority of Jewish scribes and the attractiveness to the early Church of a Jesus who ‘out-interprets’ scribes and Pharisees while displaying grapho-literacy.

⁵² Derrenbacker, *Ancient*, 24, observes that geography also affected access to the material matters of literate education.

⁵³ Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.2.1 (Butler, LCL).

⁵⁴ P.Oxy. 724, a contract for a slave to learn shorthand, attests apprenticeship learning and is discussed by Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters*, 60–61; E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 70, 87; E. Randolph Richards, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* (WUNT 2.42; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 57, 61. Sir 51.23 may refer to apprenticeship. Demsky, ‘Writing,’ 16, suggests Israelite priests were formally educated via apprenticeship.

⁵⁵ I will not here engage the debate about the stages of education. See generally Richards, *Paul*, 84–87; Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (LEC 5; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 32.

2.1 Writing in Greco-Roman Egypt

Instructive for understanding the distinction between reading and writing for the entire period under discussion in this thesis (roughly 30–400 CE) are the recent studies of Cribiore upon Greco-Roman Egyptian school papyri. Cribiore is instructive for two reasons. First, the papyri that she studies are the largest collection of primary sources detailing the explicit method(s) by which reading and writing were taught in the ancient world. One must, of course, recognize that her studies are upon Egyptian evidence, and so we should allow room for differences in other corners of the empire. However, scholars must proceed with the available evidence rather than be frozen by unknown evidence that may lie in the sands. Second, and related, there is every indication that, even in an area such as Roman Judea where the specific text of instruction differed (typically Torah rather than Homer), the social realities dictating who learned to read and write and how much education they received extended across the Roman Empire. There is thus no reason to see the Egyptian evidence as atypical. That is, first-century Jews might have learned via Torah and fourth-century monastics via the writings of the apostles, while Greco-Roman Egyptian schoolchildren learned via Homer, but *who* learned and *how* they learned remained constant.

2.1.1 The Pedagogical Process

In his *History of Education in the Ancient World*, Marrou claims, ‘Writing was taught in the same way as reading.’⁵⁶ Cribiore, however, counters that such statements oversimplify the situation shown in the Egyptian school papyri to a significant degree:

The assumption that the two skills [reading and writing] were attained at the same time and according to the same pedagogical principles is unwarranted, and more sophisticated studies of literacy now tend to distinguish between literacy’s necessary components—reading and writing. . . . To be sure, both skills belong in school contexts, yet only the privileged few progressed through all educational levels.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Marrou, *History*, 155.

⁵⁷ Cribiore, *Writing*, 9–10. Also, p.148: ‘An investigation into learning to write and read in Graeco-Roman Egypt must take into account these two constituents of literacy as separate entities. . . . It is essential to keep in mind not only the different challenges that reading offered to ancient students but also the fact that the limited length of schooling influenced teaching methods.’ Cribiore followed *Writing* with *Gymnastics*; both are drawn upon below.

That very few individuals made it through the entire pedagogical process⁵⁸ is key, for writing appeared at different stages of the educational process in Greco-Roman Egypt with different purposes and levels of literacy implied. ‘The school exercises show that at the same time that students were learning to juggle the letters of the alphabet, they had to apply their new expertise by learning to write their personal names.’⁵⁹ Thus, signature literacy was actually a nascent stage of grapho-literacy, but one with important implications for the majority of students who would not proceed further. From that point on in an individual’s life he or she would at least be ranked among those who could sign his or her own name on documents, and thus participate, even if marginally, in literate culture.⁶⁰

How, exactly, did students learn to write their names and short texts? Cribiore claims two methods appear in the evidence: the copying method and the syllabic method. Under the ‘copying method,’ students first learned to shape letters and then moved directly to copying texts manually that they were incapable of reading, as evidenced by their inability to correct mistakes.⁶¹ Outside of the school papyri, Cribiore cites Quintilian and Seneca as evidence for the copying method. Quintilian says, ‘As soon as the child has begun to know the shapes of the various letters, it will be no bad thing to have them cut as accurately as possible upon a board, so that the pen may be guided along the grooves.’⁶² Seneca similarly remarks that even before boys are allowed to follow a model, ‘Their fingers are held and guided by others so that they may follow the outlines of the letters.’⁶³ Writing in these instances, then, amounts to letter recognition and formation, without the ability

⁵⁸ Noted also by Carr, *Writing*, 183, 187, 192.

⁵⁹ Cribiore, *Gymnastics*, 167. On p.168, Cribiore includes a photograph of an ostrakon where a schoolboy has written his name and then practiced the first four letters of the alphabet. See also her *Writing*, 152, and Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 251–2. Cribiore’s study provides evidence for the speculation of Bar-Ilan, ‘Illiteracy,’ 56n.4, regarding signature literacy as an early stage in education.

⁶⁰ Cribiore discusses attaching an epistolary greeting in one’s own hand in *Writing*, 4–5, 7, 10, as evidence that one of the education process’ primary goals was simply to enable students to participate in literate culture and claims, ‘There can be no doubt that inhabitants of Graeco-Roman Egypt preferred to sign documents and letters in their clumsy, belaboured characters than be considered among illiterates. It was better to possess and exhibit the skill in limited and imperfect degree, however difficult and unpleasant to the eye their efforts were’ (10). In this respect, it is interesting to consider Paul’s signing epistles in his own handwriting. See my discussion in Chris Keith, “‘In My Own Hand’: Grapho-Literacy and the Apostle Paul,” *Bib* (2008), forthcoming.

⁶¹ Cribiore, *Gymnastics*, 169; *Writing*, 151.

⁶² Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.1.27 (Butler, LCL).

⁶³ Seneca, *Ep.* 94.15 (Gummere, LCL).

to understand those letters as constituent parts of larger language units of syllables, words, or sentences.⁶⁴ That these students were forced to copy texts letter by letter earned the name of ‘slow writers’ (brade, wj gra, fwn/gra, fousa) for those who never advanced beyond this limited literacy, which can be described as ‘probably on the verge of illiteracy.’⁶⁵ Thus, under the copying method, writing came before reading (albeit a nascent form of writing).

Some ancient educational theorists, however, advocated a slightly different method, known as the ‘syllabic method’ since syllable recognition followed alphabet recognition immediately, with writing coming later.⁶⁶ Dionysius of Halicarnassus (first century CE) provides an example, and it is here worth including the long quotation since he references the entire pedagogical spectrum from initial instruction to professional writing:

When we are taught to read, first we learn by heart the names of the letters, then their shapes and their values, then, in the same way, the syllables and their effects, and finally words and their properties. . . . And when we have acquired knowledge of these things, we begin to write and read (gra, fein te kai. avnaginw, skein), syllable by syllable and slowly at first. It is only when a considerable lapse of time has implanted firmly in our minds the forms of the words that we execute them with the utmost ease, and we read through any book that is given to us unfalteringly and with incredible confidence and speed. It must be assumed that something of this kind happens with accomplished professional writers when they come to deal with literary composition and the harmonious arrangement of clauses.⁶⁷

Likewise, Manilius (early first century CE):

Children who have not yet begun their lessons are first shown the shape and name of a letter, and then its value is explained; then a syllable is

⁶⁴ Prior to Cribiore’s work, James L. Crenshaw, ‘Education in Ancient Israel,’ *JBL* 104 (1985): 607, noted that ‘numerous errors in the [Egyptian] school copies survived, which suggests that learning did not always accompany copying, inasmuch as students seem often not to have understood the text.’

⁶⁵ Cribiore, *Writing*, 6. For discussion of ‘slow writers,’ see Cribiore, *Gymnastics*, 163–4, 176–7; Cribiore *Writing*, 116–7, 150–52; Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 254, 254n.419, 276–7, 318; Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, 43; Thomas J. Kraus, “‘Slow Writers’—BRADEWS GRAFONTES: What, How Much, and How Did They Write?,” in his *Ad Fontes*, 131–45; repr. from *Eranos* 97 (1999): 86–97; Youtie, ‘Brade, wj gra, fwn,’ 239–61.

⁶⁶ Cribiore, *Gymnastics*, 169. For the examples that follow and others, see Cribiore, *Writing*, 139–41.

⁶⁷ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Literary Composition* (Usher, LCL). This reference is from 2.229 of the Loeb edition.

formed by the linking of letters; next comes the building up of a word by reading its component syllables; afterwards the meaning of expressions and the rules of grammar are taught. . . .⁶⁸

According to these theorists, literate education followed a clear pattern in which syllable recognition formed the initial stages with writing mentioned as a later stage.⁶⁹

Papyrologists have questioned Cribiore's methodological grounds for identifying the copying method and syllabic method as two different instructional techniques.⁷⁰ In her later work, she admits the possibility that teachers could have practiced both methods simultaneously when advancing students with varying competencies through the different stages of literate education.⁷¹ However, two facts remain that are pertinent to the present study. First, the ancient world certainly knew individuals such as Petaus, who could write without being able to read enough to correct his own mistakes.⁷² Second, whether rudimentary copying preceded or followed larger language unit recognition, compositional writing dwelled at the high end of the pedagogical spectrum, as the above quotation of Dionysius of Halicarnassus states explicitly. Reading was thus an 'accomplishment of the intermediate student'⁷³ and necessary to proceed to compositional writing, as 'the ability to articulate one's thoughts in writing was achieved only when much literature had been digested.'⁷⁴ That is, only once a student was capable of absorbing someone else's thoughts were they deemed capable of expressing their own thoughts via the written medium. And importantly, very few students ever progressed this far.

⁶⁸ Manilius, *Astronomica* 2.755–761 (Goold, LCL). Cribiore, *Writing*, 141: 'Manilius clearly points to reading as the object of the whole learning progression.'

⁶⁹ Cribiore, *Gymnastics*, 169. For fuller discussion of various ancient educational theorists, see Cribiore, *Writing*, 139–52.

⁷⁰ See especially Konrad Vössing, 'Schreiben lernen, ohne lesen zu können? Zur Methode des antiken Elementarunterrichts,' *ZPE* 123 (1998): 121–5. Other reviews of Cribiore's work are Herwig Maehler, review of *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* by Raffaella Cribiore, *Gnomon* 75 (2003): 229–35; Konrad Vössing, review of *Gymnastics of the Mind* by Raffaella Cribiore, *Gnomon* 75 (2003): 613–6. (My thanks to Peter Arzt-Grabner for alerting me to these reviews.)

⁷¹ Cribiore, *Gymnastics*, 176–7.

⁷² Hanson, 'Ancient Illiteracy,' 172, notes that low-level officials who "did not know letters" only became more common in the years after Petaus.

⁷³ Cribiore, *Writing*, 149.

⁷⁴ Cribiore, *Gymnastics*, 177.

2.1.2 Gradations of Writing

That writing as copying was an initial stage of literate education, while writing as composition was a final stage, reveals gradations within the skill of writing itself.⁷⁵ Cribiore observes, 'Writing is a multifaceted activity, involving many levels of competence ranging from the ability to trace a few characters or copy a text to the capacity to engage in literary composition,' and she identifies four definitions for writing in the Greco-Roman Egyptian context: tracing words; copying or taking dictation; crafting rhetorical units; and authoring an original text.⁷⁶ Further, copying from dictation was a more difficult skill than copying from a text.⁷⁷ The difference between signature literacy and compositional writing is substantial enough that Macdonald refuses to regard the former as 'writing-literacy.'⁷⁸

One can therefore summarize the pedagogical process for learning to read and write in Greco-Roman Egypt generally as a three-stage process. At the initial stage, students learned to recognize letters of the alphabet and, at times, mechanically reproduce them. Based on this ability students were then taught in a secondary stage to recognize syllables, words, and eventually sentences. Only after a student had mastered this ability and could associate himself with literature could he (or, more rarely, she) move on to more advanced copying or compositional writing. The fact that few progressed entirely through the pedagogical process means that those

⁷⁵ Likewise, Ronald F. Hock, 'Writing in the Greco-Roman World,' *SBL Forum* (May 10, 2004), n.p. [cited 12 February 2007]. Online: <http://www.sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleID=264>. Hock states that compositional writing (though he does not use this term) was stressed in the 'latter stages of the curricular sequence' though signature literacy, etc., was accomplished in the 'primary stage.'

Obviously, there are gradations within the skill of reading as well. See Cribiore, *Writing*, 151; Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 465. On p.473, Hezser offers an apt description of the reading situation in Roman Judea: 'A center-and-periphery model of concentric circles may be applied to Jewish reading practices in Roman Palestine: At the center one has to imagine a very small number of highly literate people who could read literary texts in both Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek. Then there was another, slightly broader circle of those who could read literary texts in either Hebrew/Aramaic or Greek only. They were surrounded by people who could not read literary texts but only short letters, lists and accounts. A broader proportion of the population may have been able to identify individual letters, names, and labels. They as well as the vast majority of their entirely illiterate contemporaries had access to texts through intermediaries only.' See also the comments of Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, 167–8, on both compositional writing and public reading.

⁷⁶ Cribiore, *Writing*, 10. See also Cribiore, *Gymnastics*, 171; Haran, 'On the Diffusion,' 83; Hock, 'Writing,' n.p. Hock describes the various stages evident in the *progymnasmata* of Aphthonius.

⁷⁷ Cribiore, *Writing*, 10.

⁷⁸ Macdonald, 'Literacy,' 53.

capable of copying from dictation or expressing their own thought via the written medium were necessarily a limited minority—in a given population more people were completely illiterate than could recognize letters; more people could write their name or copy letter-for-letter than could read; more people could read than could compose.⁷⁹ Reading and writing were perhaps even more distinct from one another in the Jewish context.

2.2 Writing in Roman Palestine⁸⁰

The material evidence for literate education in Palestine is scarce. However, the available evidence suggests that the rarity of writing in the Greco-Roman Egyptian environment was, if anything, slightly more pronounced in the Palestinian Jewish environment.⁸¹ Hezser asserts that this is the product of at least two factors: lower overall literacy rates in Palestine; and the emphasis of Jewish elementary schools on the ability to read Torah.

⁷⁹ Contra Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter Writer: His World, His Options, His Skills* (GNS 41; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995), 8: 'In the Greco-Roman world *all* who went to school learned to write, and were trained by being obliged to take down dictation' (emphasis added).

⁸⁰ This section will not discuss Greek or Aramaic education for Jews, since Jesus' writing in PA is specifically related to the Torah and is portrayed as occurring in Judea where 'Hebrew remained the primary language of literary expression' (Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 32). See also Nathan Drazin, *History of Jewish Education from 515 B.C.E. to 220 C.E.* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1940), 84; George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim* (3 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927–1930), 1.318–22; and particularly the argument of Carr, *Writing*, 253–72, that Hebrew study intensified amongst Jewish elite in reaction to Hellenism. For discussion of Greek education for Jews, see Eliezer Ebner, *Elementary Education in Ancient Israel During the Tannaitic Period (10–220 C.E.)* (New York: Bloch, 1956), 84–86; Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (trans. John Bowden; 2 vols.; WUNT 10; London: SCM Press, 1974), 1.65–83; Martin Hengel, *The Pre-Christian Paul* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM, 1991), 54–62; Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 90–94. Macdonald, 'Literacy,' 72n.72, 73, notes the lack of evidence for Jewish Greek education in the Diaspora. For discussion of Aramaic education of (elite) Jews in ancient Israel, see Carr, *Writing*, 156–8.

What follows will also avoid the debate over precisely when Jewish schools emerged. See Samuel Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher: Didactic Authority and Transmission in Ancient Israel, Ancient Judaism and the Matthean Community* (ConBNT 24; Stockholm: Almqvist and Wicksell, 1994), 63–67; Ebner, *Elementary*, 38–50; Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 68–109.

⁸¹ Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 500. In contrast, Elias J. Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 165, claims, 'It is probable that reading and writing were widespread in Hellenistic Judea.' It is not clear whether he means the skills were widespread geographically, or amongst individuals. If he means the latter, the evidence suggests otherwise, as this chapter will show.

2.2.1 Lower Literacy Rates in Palestine

As in the Greco-Roman context, the skill of writing would have been less widespread than the skill of reading in Palestine.⁸² The difference between the two may have been slightly heightened in a Jewish context, however, because of its overall lower literacy rate. Hezser closes her landmark study by offering several reasons for why ‘the average Jewish literacy rate (of whatever degree) must be considered to have been lower than the average Roman rate.’⁸³ Several are worth mention here. One reason is that the vast majority of Palestine in antiquity was rural, and literacy is connected with urban environments.⁸⁴ Most Jews, agrarian and functioning at a sustenance level, would have found little need for writing since most agreements could and would be reached orally. Hezser cites as another indicator of lower overall literacy rates the lack of Jewish public libraries in Palestine.⁸⁵ One should be hesitant here, however, for the lack of a public library says little about the prevalence of private reading. A third, and stronger, indicator is that more common forms of writing appear less often in Jewish culture. For example, very few ancient Jewish letters have been discovered or leave traces in other literary works that have survived, and likewise Jewish dedicatory inscriptions and graffiti are less common than in other Roman areas.⁸⁶ Gamble represents the opposition to Hezser’s thesis by claiming that literacy rates were relatively higher in Jewish society compared to the Greco-Roman environment.⁸⁷ To some extent, it is unimportant whether the literacy rates in Roman Palestine were *slightly* higher or *slightly* lower than the empire generally; for even if one grants an exceptionally generous literacy rate of 20% for the sake of the argument, one is still left with an 80% majority illiterate. Beyond this

⁸² Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 474; Schürer, *History*, 2.420.

⁸³ Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 496.

⁸⁴ Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 496. Likewise, Bar-Ilan, ‘Illiteracy,’ 48–50; Albert I. Baumgarten, *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation* (JSJSup 55; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1997), 135; Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 17. Everett, *Literacy*, 12–13, argues against this ‘economic-determinist view of literacy’: ‘Despite humanist assumptions concerning the connections between ancient *urbanitas* and *litterae*, the history of literacy is full of examples that deny the validity of using urbanism as a guide to levels of literate activity.’ This is unpersuasive, however. While exceptions may exist, significantly more examples remain that affirm a connection between urbanism and literate activity.

⁸⁵ Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 498.

⁸⁶ Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 500.

⁸⁷ Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 7. Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The Intertextual Jesus: Scripture in Q* (Harrisburg: Trinity International Press, 2000), 15, makes a similar statement and cites Gamble.

reality, a final factor that Hezser observes throughout her study is perhaps most important to the present discussion, which is concerned not with literacy per se, but a particular form of it, which was centred on the Torah. She argues that one reason there were lower levels of writing amongst the Jewish population of the Roman Empire is that the Jewish education system simply did not emphasize, or indeed include, the skill of writing. The literary evidence supports this claim, and to this issue the present study now turns.

2.2.2 *The Absence of Writing in Jewish Elementary Pedagogy*

The realities of Jewish elementary education mostly paralleled those of Greco-Roman Egyptian elementary education—few families could afford to send their children all the way through school and school was not necessarily available in every geographical location.⁸⁸ This may initially seem to contradict the protestations of the biblical texts,⁸⁹ Philo,⁹⁰ Josephus,⁹¹ and other Jewish texts,⁹² all of which emphatically insist on the importance of imparting knowledge of the Law to children amongst Jews, as well as the rabbinic material insisting on the importance of elementary schools, attendance, and proper classroom behaviour.⁹³ These protestations lead Schürer to say, ‘In light of all of this, there can be no doubt, therefore, that in the circles of traditional Judaism a boy was familiarized with the demands of the Torah from earliest childhood.’⁹⁴ However, one must remember (1) that all these sources derive from the literate elite minority, and, more importantly, (2) that there is no specific mention of the teaching of the skill of writing in any of

⁸⁸ Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 67. Likewise, Nathan Morris, *The Jewish School: An Introduction to the History of Jewish Education* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1937), 62: ‘Among the Greeks, as among the Jews, the economic position of the parents was the determining factor.’

⁸⁹ Deuteronomy 4.8–10; 6.7; 11.19. Note that following the injunctions of Deuteronomy 6.7 and 11.19 the instruction to write the laws on the doorposts of the house (Deuteronomy 6.8; 11.20) certainly connect writing the laws to remembrance of them; however, writing itself is not here described as part of the content of what is taught to ‘sons’ regarding the law.

⁹⁰ Philo, *Legat.* 16.115.

⁹¹ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.12 (‘Above all we pride ourselves on the education of our children. . . .’ [Thackeray, LCL]), 2.18, 2.25; *Ant.* 4.8.12; cf. *Life* 2.7–9.

⁹² *T. Levi* 13.2; *4 Macc.* 18.10.

⁹³ *Inter alia*, *m. Shab.* 1.3; *y. Ketub.* 32c (8.11); *y. Meg.* 73d (3.1); *b. B. Bat.* 21a; *b. Shabbat* 119b.

⁹⁴ Schürer, *History*, 2.418.

them.⁹⁵ Schürer is correct to note that such statements reference ‘familiarization’ with Torah; but important for present purposes, this came primarily through the acquisition of reading skills or through oral teaching. A brief presentation of (the lack of) writing in Jewish pedagogy follows.

Though informal elementary Torah schools were available (at least from the rabbinic period⁹⁶) the onus of Jewish education fell upon parents, particularly the father.⁹⁷ According to the widow of *4 Maccabees* 18.10, her husband fulfilled this duty: ‘While he was still with you, he taught you the law and the prophets’ (NRSV). Similarly, in the fictionalized account of *Jubilees*, both Cainan (8.2) and Abraham (11.16) learn writing from their fathers.⁹⁸ Morris says, ‘It was a duty which rested primarily on the father, who, in his turn, relegated it to the teacher.’⁹⁹ That is, the father was (ideally) responsible for either providing education himself (*b. B. Bat.* 21a; *4 Macc.* 18.10; *Jub.* 8.2, 11.16) or taking the necessary measures to secure that education was provided for his son elsewhere. ‘This restricted education in general to the children of parents who were able to teach them or to pay for having them taught, and had the interest to do it.’¹⁰⁰ The reality of an agrarian culture where most families lived, at best, at sustenance level, however, meant that the majority of

⁹⁵ Similarly, Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (trans. Eric J. Sharpe; combined ed. with *Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity*; BRS; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 58; Morris, *Jewish School*, 14–15; Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 308n.102.

⁹⁶ Moore, *Judaism*, 1.311, plausibly suggests earlier.

⁹⁷ Baumgarten, *Flourishing*, 116 (with regard to ancient Israel); Carr, *Writing*, 130; Crenshaw, ‘Education,’ 614; S. S. Laurie, *Historical Survey of Pre-Christian Education* (2d ed.; London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900), 76; André Lemaire, ‘Education (Israel),’ *ABD* 2.306 (with regard to ancient Israel); Moore, *Judaism*, 1.316; Morris, *Jewish School*, 4, 21, 42, 60, 66; Schürer, *History*, 2.418; Robert Louis Wilken, ‘Christian Formation in the Early Church,’ in *Educating People of Faith: Exploring the History of Jewish and Christian Communities* (ed. John Van Engen; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 50. Crenshaw, ‘Education,’ 613, notes however, that in 2 Chronicles 17.7–9 ‘the earlier task resting on the shoulders of parents [of teaching the law], according to the idealized picture of Deut 6:7, is here entrusted to a small band of teachers who enjoy royal favor.’ See also Carr, *Writing*, 130. For Greco-Roman parental responsibility for education, see Robin Barrow, *Greek and Roman Education* (IAW; London: Macmillan Education, 1976), 73.

⁹⁸ Baumgarten, *Flourishing*, 121. Pace Baumgarten, *Flourishing*, 117, however, *T. Levi* 13.2 does not necessarily have Levi ‘advising his descendants to learn to read *and write* so they can fulfill their duties’ (emphasis added). As this chapter observes, one cannot assume that they are the same skill or a part of the same skill set. Both Carr, *Writing*, 206, and Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 86, likewise assume that *grammata* includes writing in *T. Levi* 13.2.

⁹⁹ Morris, *Jewish School*, 66.

¹⁰⁰ Moore, *Judaism*, 1.316.

Jewish children acquired literate skills in the home if at all.¹⁰¹ And here one must keep in mind the overall literacy percentage (likely less than 10%) and its implications for the percentage of parents who would have been able to pass education on to their children.¹⁰² If the aforementioned accounts of Cainan and Abraham in *Jubilees* contain any historical value with regard to fathers teaching sons to write, this was certainly not the experience of the majority of Jewish children.

Even for those children who were able to attend elementary school, however, writing does not appear to have been part of the syllabus, and thus most children had no opportunity to develop writing capability.¹⁰³ The educational focus of Jewish pedagogy was upon reading the Torah, a focus that ‘seems to have been customary at least since the last centuries of the Second Temple’ and is likely also related to the liturgical importance of reading from the written text.¹⁰⁴ In this regard, Goodman remarks, ‘According to the rabbis, an ability to read scripture was thus a prime aim of education (cf. *Mishnah Abot* 5.21). But writing was less common. . . .’¹⁰⁵

It is significant that Torah-reading was the focus of elementary education, since this is one instance in which Jewish literate education differed from Greco-Roman literate education, both in content and form.¹⁰⁶ In terms of content, the Torah as the primary reading material of the educational process may have been a conscious identity marker against a Greco-Roman education that employed Homer for similar purposes.¹⁰⁷ In terms of form, it seems that writing was only taught at

¹⁰¹ Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1.273. Likewise, Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 114.

¹⁰² Similarly, Baumgarten, *Flourishing*, 116–7; cf. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 57. Drazin, *History*, 81–87, overlooks this fact.

¹⁰³ Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 474.

¹⁰⁴ Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 68 (quotation); Schürer, *History*, 2.420. Carr, *Writing*, 142–56, notes that the Torah was likely not the only pedagogical text in ancient Israel and provides a persuasive argument that numerous other texts in the Hebrew Scriptures were likely used for education and counter-education. He further argues that the shift toward Torah pedagogical dominance occurs in Sir (206–12).

¹⁰⁵ Goodman, ‘Texts,’ 99–100. Likewise, Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 61–66.

¹⁰⁶ Other differences on the Jewish side are the intention for universal education of children (Ebner, *Elementary*, 23; Millard, *Reading and Writing*, 157; Shmuel Safrai, ‘Elementary Education, Its Religious and Social Significance in the Talmudic Period,’ *Cahiers D’Histoire Mondiale* 11 [1968]: 148), probable (slightly) higher esteem for elementary school teachers (Ebner, *Elementary*, 59; Morris, *Jewish School*, 66), and lack of athletics (Carr, *Writing*, 256; Ebner, *Elementary*, 26; Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 57).

¹⁰⁷ Baumgarten, *Flourishing*, 118–9; Bickerman, *Jews*, 171; Carr, *Writing*, 212, 225, 239; Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 192; Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 62–63; Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 70–71; Morris, *Jewish School*, 56; Safrai, ‘Elementary Education,’ 149; 154. For the

scribal schools/communities, that is, not as a part of elementary education. Granted, y. *Ta'an* 69a (4.8), 'the only direct reference that writing was taught in the elementary school,'¹⁰⁸ raises the possibility that writing was part of the curriculum since it describes writing instruments in the school as potential weapons in the event of an attack. This passage from the Palestinian Talmud (ca. 400 CE) does no more than raise the possibility, however, as it is clearly legendary (the passage claims there were 500 schools in Bethar with no fewer than 500 students each, all of whom were burned in their Torah scrolls except a lone survivor) and it is not clear whether the pens belonged to the teachers or the students.¹⁰⁹ Archaeologists have unearthed abecedaries and ostraca from various periods of Jewish history, and some scholars take these as evidence that parents and/or schools taught writing.¹¹⁰ Not all scholars agree that these are school exercises, however.¹¹¹ Rather than initial alphabetic instruction, 'These ostraca could be considered exercises, perhaps to test the writing instruments, written by more or less skilled scribes.'¹¹² Some abecedaries do evince unskilled hands rather than professional ones, but one cannot take these automatically as school exercises, often because of their location or the material upon

importance of Homer in Greco-Roman education, see Margalit Finkelberg, 'Homer as a Foundation Text,' in *Homer, the Bible, and Beyond: Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World* (eds. Margalit Finkelberg and Guy G. Stroumsa; JSRC 2; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 75–96; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1.66–67; Hock, 'Writing,' n.p.; Morgan, *Literate Education*, 69–78 (specifically in connection to Hellenistic identity construction, p.77–78). Cf. *m. Yad.* 4.6, in which the Sadducees cry out against the Pharisees for claiming that the Holy Scriptures render hands unclean while the 'writings of Hamiram' (Danby) do not, the latter of which 'is variously explained as "books of the heretics (*Minim*)" or "the books of Homer"' (Herbert Danby, trans., *The Mishnah* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933], 784n.7). Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 149, translates: 'writings of Homer.'

¹⁰⁸ Quotation from Ebner, *Elementary*, 83.

¹⁰⁹ Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 50, 78, 309, cf. 147, warns strongly against taking the story as historically trustworthy.

¹¹⁰ Wilhelm Bacher, 'Das altjüdische Schulwesen,' *Jahrbuch für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur* 6 (1903): 66; Drazin, *History*, 85; André Lemaire, *Les Écoles et la Formation de la Bible dans l'Ancien Israël* (OBO 39; Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1981), 7–33 (includes images of ostraca). Cf. Ebner, *Elementary*, 76.

¹¹¹ Haran, 'On the Diffusion,' 85–91; Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 85–89; Emile Puech, 'Les Écoles dans l'Israël Préexilique: Données Épigraphiques,' in *Congress 1986*, 189–96. See also Byrskog, *Jesus*, 66.

¹¹² Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 87. Haran, 'On the Diffusion,' 86, also argues against the abecedary-school connection, and views the unskilled abecedaries as the products of craftsmen rather than school children. George J. Brooke, '4Q341: An Exercise for Spelling and for Spells?' in *Writing and Ancient Near Eastern Society*, 271–82, never once raises the possibility that 4Q341 is a school exercise, but rather assumes that it is the work of a skilled scribe throughout.

which the letters were written.¹¹³ In sum, there is a lack of certain evidence that writing was a part of initial Jewish education.¹¹⁴

In light of an overwhelming absence of unambiguous evidence of an ‘abecedary-school connection,’¹¹⁵ a number of scholars claim that writing was not a constituent element of elementary education and only acquired via specialist or later training.¹¹⁶ Summing up Late Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism in this regard, Bar-Ilan claims,

Children were taught to read from the Bible, but not necessarily to write (*Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, A6, p.29). In antiquity specialization in writing involved the complicated techniques of preparing all the writing accessories: the parchment, the stylus and the ink, and therefore it was impossible to teach advanced writing skills to young children (as nowadays), so this level of teaching had to be postponed till the age of 14–15 after the elementary stage (Jub 11:16; *P.T. Ketubbot* 8:11, 32c). That is to say that even among those who knew how to read, many or, more accurately, most did not know how to write.¹¹⁷

Hezser reiterates the specialization of writing toward the end of her study while noting the relative absence of ‘creative literary writing’ (such as graffiti) in Palestine compared to other Roman cities: ‘One may assume, though, that biblical texts were

¹¹³ Haran, ‘On the Diffusion,’ 86–91. Haran perhaps takes too minimalist of a position with the evidence given the great amount of information scholars *do not* know about ancient Jewish education. Relatedly, however, David Toshio Tsumura, “‘Misspellings’ in Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit: Some Cases of Loss or Addition of Signs,” in *Writing and Ancient Near Eastern Society*, 143–51, argues against viewing alternative (Ugaritic) spellings categorically as ‘misspellings’ (and thus evidence of an unskilled scribe) since some alternative spellings in scribal exercises may be phonetic spellings.

¹¹⁴ Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 88. Carr, *Writing*, 242n.5, criticizes Hezser’s scepticism of the lack of writing in Jewish alphabetic instruction since ‘we have no evidence of ancient training in reading that did not involve at least some practice in writing.’ On p.277, however, Carr seems to affirm Hezser. For the sake of clarity, the present point (and Hezser’s as well) is not that some element of writing instruction *could not* have occurred, or even did not occasionally, but that there is not enough evidence to conclude that it definitely and regularly did. More importantly, even if, for example, one allows that signature literacy was acquired simultaneously with reading skills, there is certainly not enough evidence for training that would support skills such as compositional writing or dictation copying. Note also Ebner, *Elementary*, who thinks that while drawing of Hebrew letters was taught, ‘Writing as an art in itself . . . had no place in the Jewish elementary school’ (83).

¹¹⁵ Haran, ‘On the Diffusion,’ 88.

¹¹⁶ Bar-Ilan, ‘Writing,’ 22; Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 7; Goodman, ‘Texts,’ 100; Morris, *Jewish School*, 55, 81–83; Safrai, ‘Elementary Education,’ 154. Cf. Crenshaw, ‘Education,’ 605–6, 614 (In these comments Crenshaw notes the possibly specialized nature of writing and scribal training generally. Elsewhere, however [602, 604], he speaks of ‘reading and writing’ as an acquired set. Similarly, Haran, ‘On the Diffusion,’ 92.)

¹¹⁷ Bar-Ilan, ‘Writing,’ 22. Similarly, Demsky, ‘Writing,’ 13.

repeatedly recopied, that is, literary writing seems to have almost exclusively been a reproductive activity carried out by specialized scribes.¹¹⁸ Likewise, Safrai states, 'Writing was not studied in the schools,' but 'was taught separately not as part of the school syllabus.'¹¹⁹ The members of the Qumran community, which undoubtedly contained a number of grapho-literate individuals, plausibly reflect the type of individuals who received specialist training in order to work with texts.¹²⁰ (Yet, even 'amongst the Qumranites there were various levels of literacy.'¹²¹) This specialist training likely continued well into the rabbinic period, as Morris observes:

[Writing] became a specialised trade. There were communal scribes, or clerks, for the purpose of dealing with various legal documents. There were also scribes, a kind of secretaries, attached to the heads of the Academies. These were sometimes so expert in all that concerned their profession that even the sages themselves could not hold their own against them. Boys apparently were apprenticed to these scribes in the same manner as to any other tradesmen. But this would be after school age. The elementary school itself in that period did not as a rule teach writing to its pupils.¹²²

The surprising silence regarding writing in ancient discussions of Jewish education concurs with the material culture evidence discussed above.¹²³ One may cite here the examples of Josephus and Philo. Josephus brags, 'Above all we pride

¹¹⁸ Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 500 (emphasis added).

¹¹⁹ Safrai, 'Elementary Education,' 154. Also, on the same page: 'There were scholars . . . who did not know this craft and one of the sages of the first half of the third century held the opinion that a scholar ought to acquire the knowledge of writing for use on behalf of the community' (Safrai is here referring to *b. Hul.* 9a). Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1.272, criticizes Safrai for not being critical enough with rabbinic sources.

¹²⁰ On Qumran as a textual and instructional community, see Carr, *Writing*, 215–39, who offers little comment on the process of learning to read and write, only commenting upon potential instructional texts/ostraca. Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 89, discusses Hebrew and Aramaic literary fragments from Qumran Cave 4, which she is inclined against seeing as school exercises (see p.476–8 for arguments that the scrolls at Qumran reflect the activity of professional scribes).

¹²¹ Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 466.

¹²² Morris, *Jewish School*, 83. Cf. Drazin, *History*, 85, who sees writing as more widespread than Morris but maintains that 'the special form used for the Holy Scrolls containing the Pentateuch' was rare. Ebner, *Elementary*, 83, also believes Morris' position is too strict, but also acknowledges a lack of evidence of writing.

¹²³ E.g., Crenshaw, 'Education,' 602–3; Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 88–89. Cf. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 58. Furthermore, Robert Goldenberg, 'Religious Formation in Ancient Judaism,' in *Educating People*, 38n.20, claims references to teachers and teaching in the rabbinic literature rarely refers to primary education and that 'the rabbinic teacher was almost always the teacher of adult disciples.' On p.40 he further claims that this discipleship arrangement occurred only once a student had learned 'the basic skills of literacy.'

ourselves on the education of our children,’ but speaks of this education in terms of *telos* rather than literate skills as he continues, ‘and regard as the most essential task in life the observance of our laws and of the pious practices, based thereupon, which we have inherited.’¹²⁴ When he states that the law commands that children be ‘taught letters’ (*grammata paideuein*; Thackeray—‘taught to read’), it is ‘in order that they may imitate the latter, and being grounded in the former, may neither transgress nor have any excuse for being ignorant of them.’¹²⁵ Likewise, Philo claims that Jewish children are ‘trained . . . we may say even from the cradle, by parents and tutors and instructors and by the far higher authority of the sacred laws and also the unwritten customs, to acknowledge one God who is the Father and Maker of the world.’¹²⁶ According to Josephus and Philo, therefore, the teaching of letters and education was for the purpose of obedience of the Law, but there is no mention of writing as part of the training.¹²⁷

In light of the preceding evidence, limited as it is, one must hold Sawyer’s statement—‘Reading and writing Hebrew were high on the educational agenda’—as inaccurate.¹²⁸ Torah knowledge and obedience were high on the educational agenda, but lower overall literacy rates in Palestine and the lack of writing as a constituent part of elementary education created a context where those who became versed in Torah did so via reading skills, memorization, and oral instruction.¹²⁹ Writing was the attribute of those who had received further specialized training. The Jewish context in this regard parallels the early Church.

¹²⁴ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.12 (Thackeray, LCL; emphasis added).

¹²⁵ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.25 (Thackeray, LCL). Carr, *Writing*, 247, refers to the idealized ‘universal Jewish literacy’ envisioned in this passage as ‘new in Judaism.’ See also *T. Levi* 13.2. With regard to ‘teaching letters,’ cf. also Ambrose, *Abr.* 1.30 (discussed on Cribiore, *Writing*, 141).

¹²⁶ Philo, *Legat.*, 16.115–116 (Colson, LCL; emphasis added).

¹²⁷ Likewise Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 58: ‘But neither Philo, Josephus nor the Dead Sea Scrolls give us any further information as to how elementary education in the Torah was carried on; the *bet sefer* is never mentioned.’ See also Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 308, 308n.102.

¹²⁸ Sawyer, *Sacred Languages*, 54.

¹²⁹ This conclusion fits well with the ‘oral-written educational-enculturation’ model proposed by Carr, *Writing*.

2.3 Writing in the Early Church

In Gamble's study of the literary culture of early Christianity, he makes a poignant comment regarding the connection between authority and education (a connection that will be important for Chapter Nine):

It is scarcely accidental that from the second century onward Christian bishops appear to have been among the best-educated Christians, that well-educated converts tended to be quickly enrolled in the clerical orders, or that the vast bulk of early Christian literature was written by clerics.¹³⁰

In other words, education and its benefits placed one on the fast-track to authority. Part of this reality is that, as in the Egyptian and Judean contexts, writing existed as a separate skill—with various gradations and the power structures they created—in the early Church as well. This should come as little surprise, as Harris notes very few (and insignificant for the present discussion) changes in literacy levels and functions in the Roman Empire between 100 BCE–250 CE.¹³¹ The *Shepherd of Hermas*, though clearly legendary, provides evidence of the similarity between the Christian and Greco-Roman environments. Although the command of *Vis.* 2.4.3 presumes Hermas can read (though perhaps only with the assistance of 'the elders') and *Vis.* 5.5–7 as well as *Sim.* 9.1.1, 10.1.1 seem to picture Hermas as taking dictation, he must copy letter by letter since he cannot identify the syllables (τ α . ι συλλαβα, ι), even if writing books; i.e. he is a 'slow writer.'¹³² While it is thus clear that some Christians received literate education from parents or through private instruction,¹³³ paltry evidence exists alongside these few references, making it difficult for scholars to know exactly how early Christians taught and learned reading and writing. Similarly to the Jewish texts referenced earlier,¹³⁴ *1 Clement* witnesses a Christian effort to 'instruct our young with instruction that leads to the fear of

¹³⁰ Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 10.

¹³¹ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 282–4.

¹³² Herm. *Vis.* 2.4.3 (reading); *Vis.* 2.1.4 (letter by letter); *Vis.* 2.1.4 and 2.4.3 (writing 'little' books); *Vis.* 5.5–7 and *Sim.* 9.1.1, 10.1.1 (writing the commandments and parables). See above p.62 for 'slow writers.' One may compare Hermas with Cicero's scribes (*librarii*) Spintharo and Tiro, discussed in *Att.* 13.25. Spintharo is comparable with Hermas—he can follow dictation syllable by syllable. Even more advanced, however, is Tiro, who can follow whole sentences. For discussion of Hermas and Christian copyists, see Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters*, 36–37.

¹³³ Consider Ambrose *Abr.* 1.30; Jerome, *Epistle* 107.4, 128.1.

¹³⁴ See above p.67.

God,’ and *Hermas* and Polycarp’s *To the Philippians* contain similar statements, but, also like the Jewish texts, none mentions reading or writing as part of that instruction.¹³⁵ Nor does *Barnabas* mention literate education when its author instructs his audience to ‘teach [their children] the fear of God’; in fact the author envisions the reader accomplishing this via corporeal punishment of children.¹³⁶ Combined with what this chapter has already observed to be the case in the rest of the Greco-Roman world, however, one can arrive at a general picture of the congruous situation in early Christianity. One can observe that writing was a rare skill in the early Church in the workings of at least two phenomena: Christian scepticism of pagan education and failure to produce an alternative system; and the presence of illiterate readers in the clerical ranks.

2.3.1 Sceptical Early Christian Pedagogy

The early Church was, as a whole, uneducated and thus a mirror image of the rest of the Greco-Roman world.¹³⁷ Further delimiting the educational opportunities for Christian children were the presumed withdrawal of children from pagan educational environments by some Christian parents (a task made much easier in an environment where ‘compulsory education’ is an oxymoron) and the fact that ‘the ancient church never undertook an alternative system of education for the faithful.’¹³⁸ These two factors combine to create an early Christian context where, at least initially, the most educated Christians were converts.

Ancient Christian sources differ on the issue of non-Christian teachers, making the question ‘What did early Christians think about pagan education?’ an impossible one to answer without first identifying exactly *which* early Christians one is discussing.¹³⁹ While many protest against Christians receiving education from

¹³⁵ *1 Clem.* 21.6 (Holmes); *Herm. Vis.* 1.3.2, 2.2.3; *Pol. Phil.* 4.2.

¹³⁶ *Barn.* 19.5; cf. 21.1.

¹³⁷ Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 6; Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 295, 305; Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, 167.

¹³⁸ Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 6. See also Marrou, *History*, 325. Consider the challenge of Julian (ruled 361–363 CE), *Adv. Galil.* 229e–230a, for Christians to provide their children with a Christian education and then compare their children to those that received a pagan education. This passage demonstrates that Julian, who is well-versed in the Christian environment, knows of no present Christian education system. This further suggests that those Christian children who did receive an education did so in pagan schools.

¹³⁹ Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters*, 56, describes the varying opinions present in the sources as ‘notoriously contradictory.’ This is perhaps an overstatement, since the sources represent

non-Christians, their very protestations and the evidence from other Christian and pagan writings demonstrate that they were not universally successful. Protestations were made, however, and sustained. ‘For almost three hundred years, from the *Didache* to Augustine, Christian scholars carried on a tradition quite censorious of Classical education.’¹⁴⁰

In his *Higher Education in the Ancient World*, Clarke cites the examples of Origen, Synesius, Basil, and Gregory of Nazianzus as evidence that ‘it was quite common for Christians to study under non-Christian teachers.’¹⁴¹ Weltin likewise observes that, of the Fathers, Basil, Athanasius, and Ambrose were the ‘most favourably disposed to Classical culture.’¹⁴² Basil is indeed favourable toward Greek writers, but warns his young readers to be critical and cautious and assumes they need his help in distinguishing what is worthwhile: ‘I have come to offer you as my counsel—that you should not surrender to these men once for all the rudders of your mind, as if of a ship, and follow them whithersoever they lead; rather, accepting from them only that which is useful, you should know that which ought to be overlooked.’¹⁴³ Later on, with caveats asserted, Basil states that ‘pagan learning is not without usefulness to the soul’ and, ‘Whenever [the poets] recount for you the deeds or words of good men, you ought to cherish and emulate these.’¹⁴⁴ One can thus confidently assume that young Christians were exposed to pagan culture in schools, and papyrological evidence supports this assumption. The third-/fourth-century P.Lond. 230 contains psalms on the recto and some of Isocrates’ *Ad Demonicum* on the verso.¹⁴⁵ Both sides contain a series of dots marking syllables and indicating that the texts were school exercises. The fourth-century P.Bour. 1 is

diversity rather than contradiction. M. L. W. Laistner, *Christianity and Pagan Culture in the Later Roman Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1951), 49, more appropriately describes the sources as ‘not uniform.’

¹⁴⁰ E. G. Weltin, *Athens and Jerusalem: An Interpretive Essay on Christianity and Classical Culture* (AARSR 49; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 13 (5–20 for entire discussion).

¹⁴¹ Clarke, *Higher Education*, 127.

¹⁴² Weltin, *Athens and Jerusalem*, 15.

¹⁴³ Basil, *Address to Young Men on Reading Greek Literature* 1.5 (Deferrari and McGuire, LCL).

¹⁴⁴ Basil, *Address to Young Men*, 4.1 (Defferari and McGuire, LCL).

¹⁴⁵ See H. J. M. Milne, ed., *Catalogue of the Literary Papyri in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1927), 173 (# 207, recto), 213–5 (# 255, verso).

also a school exercise.¹⁴⁶ The boy interestingly begins with a possible Christian formula (Qeo . j huvgolhme, no j), but proceeds to practice his exercises by, at times, writing the names of pagan gods and characters from Greek mythology (e.g., Zeu, j,¹⁴⁷ :Atlaj,¹⁴⁸ vAcilleu, j,¹⁴⁹ :Ikaroj¹⁵⁰). The editor surmises: ‘L’écopier pourrait être chrétien et l’école païenne.’¹⁵¹ Tertullian acknowledges that ‘learning literature is allowable for believers.’¹⁵² He does so begrudgingly, though, as will be seen, and it is significant that he voices his opinions on education within a treatise on idolatry. Tertullian and Basil (and Origen, see below) are not alone in their policy of disapproving tolerance. Christians, therefore, were not strangers to pagan education, but there was an equally strong contingent that warned against their presence there.

Evidence for Christian scepticism of the pagan education system comes from early Christian leaders, as well as pagans such as Celsus. The latter accuses Christians of keeping their children from teachers.¹⁵³ Both Origen and Clement of Alexandria ‘assert that lack of education was no impediment to eternal salvation,’ while Tertullian warns of the saturation of the secular education system with paganism.¹⁵⁴ Clement of Alexandria asserts that faith is a replacement for knowledge of letters, i.e., the wisdom of the world:

But, even if you have not learned to read, hearing is inexcusable, as if it, too, needed to be taught. Faith is not the possession of the wise

¹⁴⁶ For text, see Paul Collart, ed., *Les Papyrus Bouriant* (Paris: Édouard Champion, 1926), 21–27.

¹⁴⁷ P.Bour. 1, page 1, recto.

¹⁴⁸ P.Bour. 1, page 1, recto.

¹⁴⁹ P.Bour. 1, page 3, recto.

¹⁵⁰ P.Bour. 1, page 3, verso.

¹⁵¹ Collart, *Les Papyrus Bouriant*, 20. Found in the same cache, amongst other things, were a fourth-century copy of Psalms 39.15–41.5 (P.Bour. 2), a fifth-century Christian homily (P.Bour. 3), a sixth-century Christian homily (P.Bour. 4), and a portion of the *Iliad* (P.Bour. 5). There are, obviously, other possible explanations for P.Lond. 230 and P.Bour.1. In the very least, however, they provide evidence for the intertwining of Greek and Christian culture that made some Christians nervous.

¹⁵² Tertullian, *Idol.* 10 (Roberts and Donaldson, ANCL).

¹⁵³ Origen, *Cels.* 3.55–58.

¹⁵⁴ Quotation from Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 302, where he provides discussion of these sources. For the former, see Origen, *Cels.* 1.27, 6.14. Harris notes that the position of Origen and Clement is based upon the tradition that the apostles were *avgrámmatoi*, (Acts 4.13). Chapter Nine will discuss pagan criticism of Christian illiteracy.

according to this world, but of the wise according to God. That is taught without letters, and its textbook both for the unlearned and the divine is called charity, a book that is spiritual.¹⁵⁵

Regarding Tertullian, Marrou says, ‘But as profane studies could not be given up without religious studies becoming impossible—it being necessary to learn to read—he allowed the Christian child to go to school as a matter of *necessity*, but he would not allow any Christian adult to go there as a teacher.’¹⁵⁶ Hippolytus takes a similarly disapproving yet tolerant stance: ‘If a man teach children worldly knowledge, it is indeed well if he desist. But if he has no other trade by which to live, let him have forgiveness.’¹⁵⁷ The *Didascalia* takes an explicitly intolerant position:

However, avoid all books of the heathens because what have you to do with strange sayings or laws or prophecies or falsehood, those which also turn away the young from the faith, those who are young? For what is lacking for you in the word of God, that you should cast yourself upon these tales of the heathen? . . . Abstain completely therefore from strange (writings) those which are contrary (to these).¹⁵⁸

Examples of each position on this lively issue in early Christianity could be multiplied.¹⁵⁹

Despite the fact that some of these authors were willing to tolerate pedagogy from beyond the bounds of the Church, the co-existent antipathy for pagan education and books undoubtedly affected the educational opportunities of young Christians.¹⁶⁰ Beyond this, ‘Christians erected no primary schools of their own, an amazing fact in its own right.’¹⁶¹ This lack of response left the task of primary education largely to

¹⁵⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 3.11.78 (Wood, FC).

¹⁵⁶ Marrou, *History*, 321.

¹⁵⁷ Hippolytus, *Trad. ap.* 16.13 (Dix).

¹⁵⁸ *Didascalia* 2 [14–15] (Vööbus). Here and throughout I cite the *Didascalia* with the chapter reference followed by the page numbers in Vööbus’ translation in brackets.

¹⁵⁹ For full discussion see the informative essay of Laistner, *Christianity and Pagan Culture*, 49–73.

¹⁶⁰ Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters*, 57; Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 302.

¹⁶¹ Wetlin, *Athens to Jerusalem*, 13. Clarke, *Higher Education*, 119–120, discusses a possible partial exception—a father and son in Laodicea, each named Apollinarius, who attempted to ‘classicize’ the Old and New Testaments by putting them into Homeric hexameter, dramatic or lyric metres, or Platonic dialogue. (See also Parker, *Codex Bezae*, 275, who dates the birth of the elder Apollinarius to ca. 300 CE). Needless to say, however, this is not an attempt at a rival educational system.

the parents or a hired tutor, and again the child's acquisition of literacy would be determined by the larger realities of literacy percentage across the Empire, geographical location, and/or the chance that he or she was from a wealthy home.

A general Christian scepticism of pagans and their texts also meant that the highest educated Christians in the early centuries of the Church tended to be converts who had gained a pagan literate education in their pre-Christian lives.¹⁶² Weltin humorously notes that 'the Classical educational structure provided identical backgrounds for the future pagan philosopher and the potential Christian apologist, for the priest of Jupiter and the aspiring bishop of the Church.'¹⁶³ This was as true for bishops and other recognized leaders as it was for scribes, as Haines-Eitzen remarks,

Our evidence suggests that throughout the second and early third centuries, Christians did not have the means or the inclination to teach people how to read and write. . . . We should suppose, then, that copyists of early Christian literature were probably pagan converts who already knew how to write when they converted to Christianity.¹⁶⁴

Some schools arose around notable Christian teachers, but the teaching of reading or writing does not seem to have been a part of the course of this type of theologically-centred study.¹⁶⁵ According to Eusebius, Origen undertook 'the teaching of letters' (th.n tw/n grammatikw/n lo,gwn didaskali,an), but since 'it was not consonant with training in the divine studies, without more ado he broke off the task of teaching letters, as being unprofitable and opposed to sacred study.'¹⁶⁶ It is significant here that Eusebius attributes Origen's cessation of providing literate education to its antithetical relationship to 'sacred study.'

By the fourth century, some monastic circles began to privilege literate education.¹⁶⁷ It does not seem that illiterate initiates in the Pachomian community even had an option of not learning to read:

¹⁶² Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 10, 40–41.

¹⁶³ Weltin, *Athens and Jerusalem*, 12.

¹⁶⁴ Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters*, 19.

¹⁶⁵ Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 6. Cf. Laistner, *Christianity and Pagan Culture*, 49–73.

¹⁶⁶ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.3.8 (Oulton, LCL).

¹⁶⁷ See Clarke, *Higher Education*, 120.

And if he is illiterate, he shall go at the first, third, and sixth hours to someone who can teach and has been appointed for him. He shall stand before him and learn very studiously with all gratitude. Then the fundamentals of a syllable, the verbs, and nouns shall be written for him, and even if he does not want to, he shall be compelled to read. There shall be no one whatever in the monastery who does not learn to read and does not memorize something of the Scriptures.¹⁶⁸

Additionally, Cribiore cites a number of MSS from the third to the seventh centuries CE that include parts of the Old and NT as school exercises that ‘show the new emphasis on religious texts that occurred in education from the third century AD onwards.’¹⁶⁹ The rise in the importance of a literate education, both reading and writing, most likely paralleled the fact that, for Christian ascetics, copying the holy text was not necessarily a menial task (as in the Greco-Roman environment), but part of the righteous life.¹⁷⁰

Those able to participate in this righteousness were few, however. While some leaders suggested that even children who had not been committed to a monastic lifestyle should receive training in monastic community,¹⁷¹ Harris notes that there is no indication that this ever happened.¹⁷² Furthermore, Krueger assesses the rise in the fourth century of Christian hagiography, which blended writing and piety, but also claims that perhaps only 2% of the population was capable of the ‘skilled literacy’ required for literary composition.¹⁷³ Christians who were not committed to the monastic life were still exposed to catechetical instruction in some circles, but

¹⁶⁸ Pachomius, *Praecepta* 139–140 (Veilleux). Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 303n.86, says, ‘The ideal spread: in sixth-century Arles, Caesarius maintained that all female religious should learn to read and write (*Regula Sanctorum Virginum* 18.6), and Aurelian said that all monks should learn *litterae* (*Regula ad monachos* 32).’ Cf. also Paul F. Grendler, ‘Education of Christian Monastics,’ in *Encyclopedia of Monasticism* (ed. William M. Johnston; 2 vols.; Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000), 1.430–32.

¹⁶⁹ Raffaella Cribiore, ‘Literary School Exercises,’ *ZPE* 116 (1997): 54 (MSS listed on p.60).

¹⁷⁰ Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters*, 131. Though not referenced by Haines-Eitzen, note especially that Pionius sees his work as a scribe in salvific terms: ‘I gathered it [an old copy of *Martyrdom of Polycarp*] together when it was nearly worn out by age, that the Lord Jesus Christ might also gather me together with his elect into his heavenly kingdom’ (*Mart. Pol.* 22.3; Holmes). Pionius is likely a fifth-century forger, also given credit for the Pionian *Life of Polycarp* (see J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* [ed. J. R. Harmer; rev. ed.; London: Macmillan and Co., 1898], 186–7).

¹⁷¹ E.g., John Chrysostom, *Oppugn.* 3.18 (PG 47.380). See Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 312. On 312n.134, Harris remarks, ‘But clearly the very young are not in question.’

¹⁷² Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 312.

¹⁷³ Krueger, *Writing*, 2.

‘nowhere do [we] find in our second- and third-century literature about catechetical instruction, however, any indication that Christian initiates were taught how to read.’¹⁷⁴ The emphasis in catechetical instruction was, as in Jewish education, upon instruction and obedience.¹⁷⁵ This causes Laistner to observe the ‘two sharply opposed ways of life, particularly as expressed in terms of educational theory and practice—the training of the pagan in rhetoric and philosophy and the purely religious instruction imparted to Christian converts.’¹⁷⁶

Christian hesitation toward pagan education perpetuated an environment in the early Church where the skill of writing belonged to few. These few likely had gained it in their pre-conversion lives, with the later exception of some in monastic circles. Given the rhetoric of the debate over pagan education, no doubt many Christian children and slaves continued to receive pagan education.¹⁷⁷ The majority of the literate, however, were typically found in the clerical ranks and the skill of writing was limited in this context as well.

2.3.2 *Illiterates in the Clerical Ranks*

One of the ‘main points’ of Fox’s oft-quoted article on literacy and power in the early Church ‘is that reading and writing are separate skills and that in antiquity, too, the inability to write does not entail the inability to read.’¹⁷⁸ In conjunction with this emphasis, he proceeds to show how the ability to write letters was critical to the authority of bishops, such as Cyprian, especially while trying to maintain authority during persecution.¹⁷⁹ The fact that Readers are known within the ranks of the church who are incapable of writing helps explain how the ability to compose texts

¹⁷⁴ Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters*, 160n.85 (continues on p.161). She cites her ‘Hearing and Reading: Literacy and Power in the Early Christian Church’ (M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina, 1993).

¹⁷⁵ Even Geraldine Hodgson, *Primitive Christian Education* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906), who unapologetically writes her text ‘to provide material whereby adverse criticisms of Christian educational effort may be met’ (19), must acknowledge that, in their efforts ‘to reconstruct the ideal of men and women,’ Christians ‘turned their attention to discipline and character’ (18). For more on ‘education’ as religious formation in the early Church, see Wilken, ‘Christian Formation.’

¹⁷⁶ Laistner, *Christianity and Pagan Culture*, 49.

¹⁷⁷ See comments regarding Julian at n.138 above. Additionally, see the comments of Carr, *Writing*, 283, on Christian usage of Greek classics.

¹⁷⁸ Robin Lane Fox, ‘Literacy and Power in Early Christianity,’ in *Literacy and Power*, 128–9.

¹⁷⁹ Fox, ‘Literacy,’ 135–9. Chapter Nine will discuss further Cyprian’s use of literacy.

naturally enhanced the authority of the bishop (beyond this, there were also illiterate bishops, as *Didascalia* 6 [44] demonstrates). Cyprian mentions a lector named Aurelius who issued some certificates, but the certificates had to be ‘written out in the hand of . . . Lucianus, on the grounds that Aurelius is illiterate.’¹⁸⁰ P.Oxy. 2673 mentions another illiterate named Aurelius. The document is attributed to Aurelius Ammonius, but the final line states that Aurelius Serenos wrote it for him since he was illiterate.¹⁸¹ Based on this evidence, Fox claims, ‘There is no need to assume that Readers could always write: indeed, there is plain evidence, and a mass of comparative case-studies, to imply that they might not.’¹⁸² Cribiore tempers Fox’s claim based on her research with the Egyptian school papyri, reminding scholars that an ‘embryonic form of writing at times preceded reading, both in school and in the real world’ (as, for example, with ‘slow writers’).¹⁸³ It remains, however, that compositional writing, including the drafting of official documents, would have been rarer than the skill of reading in the early Church and was thus the highest form of literacy (as it was in the ancient world generally). And Chapter Two demonstrated that compositional writing is the referent of *katagra, fw* and *gra, fw* in all three of the environments discussed (Greco-Roman [Oxyrhynchus Papyri], Roman Judean [LXX], early Christian [NT]).

Furthermore, once one moves into later antiquity, the broader situation changes very little. As previously mentioned, Harris observes that from 250 CE on there is a steady decline in the literacy rates of the Roman Empire, including the Church.¹⁸⁴ Though schools continued to exist, education as a whole began to be less

¹⁸⁰ Cyprian, *Epistle* 27, 1.2 (Clarke, ACW). Also, see Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 250n.31.

¹⁸¹ The final line of P.Oxy. 2673 reads: *Auvr(h, lioj) Serh/oj e; gra(ya) u` (per) auvtou/ mh. eiv(do, toj) gra, (mmata)*, as provided in Peter Parsons et al., eds., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri XXXIII* (Graeco-Roman Memoirs 48; London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1968), 107. This text has produced much discussion. See G. W. Clarke, ‘An Illiterate Lector?’ *ZPE* 57 (1984): 103–4; Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 250n.31; Colin H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), 65; Youtie, ‘AGRAMMATOS,’ 613. Gamble, Roberts, and Youtie stress that the reference implies the lector only knew Coptic and not Greek, while Clarke cautions that scholars should not reject completely the idea that Aurelius could have been completely illiterate. Fox, ‘Literacy,’ 144 argues that it means that Aurelius could not write. The only certain indication from the text is that the reader was not capable of signing his name in Greek. Interestingly, however, the Babatha cache demonstrates that individuals did often sign in a language other than the one used for the contract.

¹⁸² Fox, ‘Literacy,’ 144.

¹⁸³ Cribiore, *Gymnastics*, 177; see further her comments on p.178 with regards to the Christian context.

¹⁸⁴ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 312–22.

common in the third and fourth centuries.¹⁸⁵ This problem was heightened in the Christian context. As the Church grew to greater power yet failed to produce a large-scale education system of its own, later Christian children were perhaps at even more of a disadvantage than those living in the second and third centuries:

From the time of Constantine onwards, as adherence to the cult became less a matter of personal enthusiasm, the degree of a Christian's literacy was determined still more than before by the usual considerations of class, gender and personal ability. The continuing lack of a specifically Christian educational program in the fourth century may in fact have put the Christians at a disadvantage in this respect.¹⁸⁶

It was during this general decline, however, that Constantine elevated Christianity's imperial status and, more importantly for the present discussion, ordered his famous fifty copies of the Scriptures from Eusebius.¹⁸⁷ Paradoxically, then, as education and literacy began to slip, Christianity's official arrival on the imperial scene via Constantine only increased the power of the written word. The texts began to function as repositories of ammunition for theological battles and literacy was expected of Christianity's leaders. To these issues this thesis will return in the final chapter, which will discuss a plausible historical context for the insertion of PA into GJohn. At this point it suffices to note the essential congruity between the levels of literacy in the Jewish and Christian contexts of the Greco-Roman world—few could read; fewer could write.

3. *Summary*

The preceding discussion demonstrates that, in the ancient context to which Second Temple (and rabbinic) Judaism and early Christianity belong, reading and writing were separately acquired and utilized skills, and that one's proficiency in writing depended upon a number of factors. This was primarily demonstrated by focussing on how an individual acquired and or employed the skill of writing in the educational environment of each setting. In each case, copying intricate texts and/or generating original material were the highest forms of literacy, even though letter formation and copying simple texts were, in some cases, the building blocks of literate education. These higher forms of writing were available to various individuals in the ancient

¹⁸⁵ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 308.

¹⁸⁶ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 319.

¹⁸⁷ Eusebius, *Vit. Const.* 4.36.

world, including females and slaves, though their percentages were not as high as free males.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, this model of literate education was broadly disseminated in the ancient world and ‘nothing that is known about Greek schools outside Egypt would lead us to suppose that under the Roman Empire they had a significantly greater impact than the schooling we know of from the papyri.’¹⁸⁹ The skill of writing remained a rarity in later antiquity, including the Church, as education began to decline, despite the rising importance of Christian texts.

Before proceeding to Chapter Four, a few further summarizing remarks are necessary. First, by emphasizing the rarity of grapho-literacy in the ancient world, the previous discussion is not meant to detract from the general ubiquitous nature of writings and texts in the ancient world. Rather, it is meant to highlight the fact that the vast amount of written material derived from a small slice of the population,¹⁹⁰ and that even amongst the educated the ability to create texts was uncommon.

Second, and critically, attainment of grapho-literacy did not necessarily imply attainment of a high—or higher—social status, as the relationship between status and literacy was a complex one. As Carr observes, ‘Writing and reading ability did not qualify a person for the aristocracy.’¹⁹¹ Indeed, a constant refrain in Haines-Eitzen’s work is the tremendous amount of socio-economic variety represented by Christian scribes.¹⁹² Among others, Bar-Ilan, Lipiński, and Schams make similar observations regarding Jewish scribes.¹⁹³ On the one hand, being illiterate was not itself a shameful thing in the ancient world, since the vast majority of the rest of the

¹⁸⁸ According to Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.23.1–2, Origen had female calligraphers at his disposal. For female scribes in Roman antiquity and early Christianity, see Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters*, 41–52; Ross S. Kraemer, ‘Women’s Authorship of Jewish and Christian Literature in the Greco-Roman Period,’ in *Women Like This: New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. Amy-Jill Levine; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 221–42. For slave education and literacy, see A. D. Booth, ‘The Schooling of Slaves in First-Century Rome,’ *TAPA* 109 (1979): 11–19; Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 247–8; 255–9; S. L. Mohler, ‘Slave Education in the Roman Empire,’ *TAPA* 71 (1940): 262–80.

¹⁸⁹ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 281.

¹⁹⁰ Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 117.

¹⁹¹ Carr, *Writing*, 190.

¹⁹² Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters*, 7, 8, 22, 27, 32–35, 54, 75.

¹⁹³ Bar-Ilan, ‘Writing,’ 21–24; E. Lipiński, ‘Royal and State Scribes in Ancient Jerusalem,’ in *Congress 1986*, 163; Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, throughout, summarized in 309–27.

population was illiterate as well.¹⁹⁴ Nor did illiteracy bar one from participation in the literate culture—illiterate individuals still had access to the economy, information, the Torah, or the teachings of the apostles through literates in their communities. ‘Most people could live out their lives, if they were content to do so, without the use of reading or writing.’¹⁹⁵

On the other hand, in some sense, grapho-literacy was simultaneously a constituent element of and antithetical to high social status. That is, one mark of status in some societies was the ability to demonstrate grapho-literacy yet avoid its use.¹⁹⁶ For example, the first-century BCE author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* disparages the copying of full texts: ‘The laborious is not necessarily the excellent. There are many things requiring labour which you would not necessarily boast of having done—unless, to be sure, you thought it a glorious feat to have transcribed by your own hand whole dramas or speeches!’¹⁹⁷ In this light, ‘One might almost say that there was a direct correlation between the social standing that guaranteed literacy and the means to avoid writing.’¹⁹⁸ Many of the grapho-literate individuals in the ancient world thus employed slaves or freedmen who had been trained as copyists. The use of copyists, via one’s own means or patronage,¹⁹⁹ displayed that one had the means to avoid the menial task of writing. This does not mean that rhetoricians, procurators, rabbis, Pharisees, or bishops such as Cyprian and Ambrose did not compose their own letters and writings from time to time. They most certainly did,²⁰⁰ and *almost* every urban leader would have been more literate than

¹⁹⁴ Criboire, *Gymnastics*, 163; Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 498–9; Kraus, ‘Uneducated,’ 155; Thatcher, *Why John Wrote*, 9.

¹⁹⁵ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 30. Similarly, Bar-Ilan, ‘Illiteracy,’ 55; Gamble, ‘Literacy and Book Culture,’ 645.

¹⁹⁶ Perhaps a rough modern analogy is that some people of wealth or status may choose to use a chauffeur. Their ability to avoid the “menial” task of driving is itself a mark of their social position. Ancient elites also had others read for them. See Paul J. Achtemeier, ‘*Omne verbum sonat*: The New Testament and the Oral Environment of Late Western Antiquity,’ *JBL* 109.1 (1990): 16, who cites Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae* 3.5.

¹⁹⁷ *Rhet. Her.* 4.4.6 (Caplan, LCL).

¹⁹⁸ Bagnall, *Reading*, 25. Also, Derrenbacker, *Ancient*, 24.

¹⁹⁹ According to Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.23, Ambrose was a patron of Origen, providing short-hand writers, copyists, and calligraphers for him. Also noted by Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 61.

²⁰⁰ Bagnall, *Reading*, 25. See also the ca. 400 CE carving of a Roman vicar in the act of writing his name, even though scribes attend him on either side, in Joseph Natanson, *Early Christian Ivories* (London: Alec Tiranti Ltd., 1953), figure 8.

those he led. Demonstrations of this literacy were critical to their authority, as it was critical even for Petaus, only a town clerk, to demonstrate his limited literary abilities. In the words of Assmann, ‘Writing was the most important means by which to control the world. Being able to write and able to administer were one and the same thing.’²⁰¹ Significant in this respect is that the author of the *Rhetorica* does not disparage compositional writing, but the rote copying of entire works. The importance to those of high status of avoiding the work of copyists does mean, however, that it may not in every case be strictly accurate to speak of Ambrose or Jerome (for example) as ‘putting pen to paper,’ since more likely than not someone else was doing that for them.²⁰²

Related to this, one should note that, while on the one hand the education system reinforced class distinctions since only the wealthy could afford education, on the other hand the acquisition of literacy provided perhaps the only thing close to what we now describe as ‘upward mobility’ in a culture where class was fixed.²⁰³ Literacy could allow one to be in the employ of high-ranking officials, and thus live above the sustenance level of most of the individuals in agrarian societies.²⁰⁴ Thus, Harris can observe both that ‘the educational system . . . tended to have socially conservative effects, reinforcing class distinctions and serving as an additional brake on social mobility,’²⁰⁵ and that ‘the practical usefulness of literacy as a means of improving one’s chances of making a livelihood must always have been recognized to some extent in the Greek and Roman worlds.’²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies* (trans. Rodney Livingstone; CMP; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 112.

²⁰² Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters*, 39, says, ‘It goes without saying that writers such as Jerome, Rufinus, and Augustine had plenty of uses for copyists.’ See also Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 359–61; Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 474–6; Kraemer, ‘Women’s Authorship,’ 227; Macdonald, ‘Literacy,’ 65 (referring to medieval England). Note that 4 Ezra (=2 Esd) 14.50 refers to Ezra as ‘scribe of the knowledge of the Most High’ (NRSV) even though 14.42 makes clear that Ezra himself did not actually write, but rather copyists took dictation.

²⁰³ On this topic, see Nicholas Purcell, ‘The *Apparitores*: A Study in Social Mobility,’ *PBSR* 51 (1983): 125–73.

²⁰⁴ Also, Derrenbacker, *Ancient*, 26.

²⁰⁵ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 333. Likewise, on p.334, he says, ‘Class distinctions and social ossification do not *depend* on the exploitation of literacy by the privileged; they are just intensified if the privileged can use writing, the others not.’

²⁰⁶ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 202.

Social status and literacy, therefore, intertwined in a multi-faceted manner that made each strongly related to yet not entirely dependent upon the other. A few examples will help demonstrate the complexity of this relationship. One example is that of Paul.²⁰⁷ Though he brags of his thorough training (Acts 22.3) and zeal for Jewish tradition (Acts 22.3; Galatians 1.14), and displays the ability to write short phrases himself ((1 Corinthians 16.21; Galatians 6.11; Colossians 4.18; 2 Thessalonians 3.17; Philemon 19), he typically uses an amanuensis. This suggests the possibility that his written Greek is functional but not polished,²⁰⁸ and one can compare here the example of Josephus, who found that he needed help when composing in Greek.²⁰⁹ Paul's use of an amanuensis, however, functions rhetorically itself—his authority as an author is displayed by his demonstration that he is important enough to avoid the task of writing. A second example is the barbarian provincial governors whom Julian removed from office and Libanius scorned. Though they could 'write quickly' (οἱ γὰρ, φωνεῖται μετὰ ταχέως), Libanius still accuses them of a lack of knowledge (νόητοι οὐκ ἐκτελεῖται).²¹⁰ It is clear that Libanius assumes a provincial governor would have the ability to write and that writing is thus associated with individuals of such status. However, it is this assumption that Libanius' rhetoric against the barbarians attempts to destroy—despite their literacy and former government positions, they are unworthy of honour and prestige. In a third example, Quintilian shows how different gradations of writing were regarded as status symbols:

The art of writing well and quickly is not unimportant for our purpose, though it is generally disregarded by persons of quality. Writing is of the utmost importance in the study which we have under consideration and by its means alone can true and deeply rooted proficiency be obtained. But a sluggish pen delays our thoughts, while an unformed and illiterate hand cannot be deciphered, a circumstance which necessitates another wearisome task, namely the dictation of what we have written to a copyist. We shall therefore at all times and in all places, and above all when we are writing private letters to our friends,

²⁰⁷ See further Keith, 'In My Own Hand,' n.p.

²⁰⁸ See Lemaire, *ABD* 6.1006.

²⁰⁹ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.9, 51. See also, Josephus, *Ant.* 20.12.1, where Josephus refers to his Greek education.

²¹⁰ Libanius, *Or.* 18.158. Norman translates: 'for all their skill in shorthand, had not a scrap of sense. . . .' (LCL). Cf. Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 313.

find a gratification in the thought that we have not neglected even this accomplishment.²¹¹

According to Quintilian, then, the ability to compose a letter, though disregarded by some, is something of which one should be proud. In instances such as these three, the rhetoric behind ancient discussions of writing becomes increasingly important. Writing as a task was prized in some contexts, disdained in others. Critical for present purposes, however, is that even dishonourable barbarian provincial governors—who are, for Libanius, the unworthy bottom rung of the elite—can write for themselves, an ability Quintilian praises. Proper use of education is debatable; the education itself is not.

Third, one must here also recognize, alongside the strong similarities between Judaism/Christianity and the broader imperial context, the important differences. While scribes capable of compositional writing or advanced copying were present and an important part of society at large, in these two contexts there is an additional factor—their texts were sacred.²¹² Grapho-literacy in these instances translated into ‘scribal literacy,’ a literate status that enabled individuals and groups to function as the port of entry into those texts for the majority of the population. Power is the inevitable attribute of individuals who can access holy texts in a textual community. Chapter Four presents the phenomenon of scribal literacy in the NT world.

²¹¹ Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.1.28–29 (Butler, LCL).

²¹² On other religious usages of literacy, see Mary Beard, ‘Writing and Religion: *Ancient Literacy* and the Function of the Written Word in Roman Religion,’ in Beard et al., *Literacy*, 35–58.

Chapter Four

Scribal Literacy in the New Testament World:

The Scribes (and Pharisees) as Text-Brokers

‘In groups where written texts were central, individuals able to serve as text-brokers accordingly occupied a position of power and prestige.’¹

‘Mastery of the Torah was a source of prestige and power.’²

The present chapter will build upon the conclusions of Chapter Three by highlighting the concomitant social significance of grapho-literacy in the world reflected by the canonical gospels. Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity were both cultures dominated by sacred texts that the majority of the population could not access for themselves. Literacy in this context often (but not always) amounted to ‘scribal’ or ‘sacred’ literacy. A full discussion of Jewish scribes or scribal/sacred literacy is beyond the scope of the present study, and thus what follows will be concentrated upon Jesus’ opponents in PA, whom John 8.3 introduces as ‘the scribes and the Pharisees.’ At the outset of this chapter, I must note the significance of the mere presence of the scribes in John 8.3, for this is the lone occurrence of $\omicron\iota\grave{\nu}$ $\text{grammatei}/j$ in GJohn. Though the following chapters will demonstrate that PA’s interpolator weaved this story into GJohn with careful consideration of its narrative location between John 7 and 8, the appearance of the scribes in John 8.3 is one of the visible seams left from the interpolator’s work that betrays PA’s non-Johannine origin.³ When PA’s interpolator includes the scribes alongside the

¹ Snyder, *Teachers*, 3.

² Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (JCM; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 74.

³ Another seam that shows PA’s non-Johannine origin in PA is that ‘the crowd’ ($\omicron\grave{\nu}\text{; cloj}$) of John 7 (7.12, 20, 31, 32, 40, 43, 49) becomes ‘the people,’ more specifically ‘all the people’ ($\text{pa}/j\ \omicron\grave{\nu}\ \text{lao}, j$), of John 8.2. The full phrase occurs nowhere else in the Johannine narrative and lao, j occurs only twice outside PA (11.50, 18.14). Barrett, *Gospel According to St. John*, 591, claims, ‘ lao, j is a Lucan word,’ and lists occurrences in the NT.

Pharisees, he alters the makeup of Jesus' opposition in a manner that has not appeared before PA in GJohn and will not appear after it. The contention of the present study is that it is no coincidence that the interpolator includes scribes—Jewish practitioners of grapho-literacy—amidst Jesus' opponents in John 8.3, given that Jesus demonstrates grapho-literacy himself in John 8.6, 8.⁴

I will first provide an introduction to scribal literacy and the concept of 'text-brokerage,' then argue that the skill of writing was integral for the social position of scribes in Second Temple Judaism as text-brokers. Finally, I will consider the portrayal of scribes as text-brokers alongside other recognized Jewish text-brokers in the NT. The NT is the most important background for the present study, since that particular symbolic universe is where PA's interpolator chose to place his unique image of Jesus, including Jesus' opponents in the pericope—'the scribes and the Pharisees.'⁵ Thus, while I will discuss historical studies of text-brokers and assert that the general image of scribes and Pharisees as authoritative interpreters in the NT is an accurate reflection of first-century Judaism,⁶ this study's primary focus is upon the NT depiction of scribal literacy.

1. A Fourth Complexity: Scribal Literacy

Chapter Three presented three complexities in the literacy landscape of Roman Judea and early Christianity: polylingualism; gradations of literacy; and the separate skills

⁴ Chapter Seven will suggest further that the presence of 'all the people' is not a coincidence either given the charge against the adulteress in PA.

⁵ Chapter Nine will observe that the earliest possible evidence for PA's inclusion in GJohn is the second century CE with the *Prot. Jas.* The current chapter is concerned with what the interpolator may have thought about scribes from his reading of Christian texts (that were authoritative in the same manner as GJohn). Thus, the designation 'NT' for the evidence from the Synoptic Gospels, Acts, and Pauline corpus here is admittedly anachronistic since a canon had not yet fully arisen. It is likely, however, that the fourfold collection of the Synoptic Gospels and John had arisen by this stage (prior to 150 CE), as well as a collection of Pauline letters (by the end of the first century CE), and that some 'orthodox' (or 'proto-orthodox') Christians recognized them as authoritative in contrast to other texts eventually labelled apocryphal or even heretical. Thus, though an anachronism, I will here retain the designation 'NT' in reference to those texts that later became the NT but already carried authoritative status in the context of the interpolator. On the date of the fourfold collection, see Stanton, *Jesus*, 85; on the collection of the Pauline letters. On the date of the Pauline collection, see Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 59 (more fully on the subject, see David Trobisch, *Paul's Letter Collection: Tracing the Origins* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994]; G. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum* [London: Oxford University Press, 1953]).

⁶ Likewise, Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (BRS; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 172, 181.

of reading and writing. A fourth complexity is the occurrence of scribal literacy, a level of literacy that enables individuals to serve as ‘text-brokers.’

1.1 Definitions

In some cultures, a special class of scribes developed in order to meet demands for the production of sacred texts and/or for the purposes of keeping official records.⁷ Harris terms this ‘scribal literacy’ while Fox describes the same phenomenon as ‘sacred literacy,’ specifically in the context of early Christianity.⁸ Goody speaks generally of ‘religious literacy.’⁹ In contrast to scribal/sacred literacy is ‘craftsman’s literacy,’ or ‘convenient literacy.’¹⁰ Harris defines the occurrence of craftsman’s literacy as ‘that state of affairs in which many, or even a majority of, skilled craftsmen, as well as members of the social elite, are literate while the mass of the population, including almost all women, are not.’¹¹ Craftsman’s, or convenient, literacy is certainly situated in power structures in the ancient world, but not to the degree of scribal literacy. In a Jewish context, a local scribe may have held prestige for being able to draw up legal documents such as a bill of sale, tax receipt, or marriage/divorce certificate, but would not have held the same social position as a Torah scribe able to read and write the Hebrew document that (eventually) received its own shrine in Jewish synagogues.¹²

Scribal literacy carried special weight in text-centred communities like the Judaism(s) and Christianity(ies) of the time periods with which this study is currently concerned.¹³ In these communities, which consisted of individuals willing to arrange

⁷ Clearly, the production and reading of sacred texts were not the same phenomena as production and reading of official records (for example, a census or tax records). That is, sacred literacy is technically a subset of scribal literacy. This chapter deals specifically with the Jewish context and scribes whose official records were their sacred texts, however. Thus, ‘scribal’ and ‘sacred’ literacy will here be used interchangeably.

⁸ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 7, 328; Fox, ‘Literacy,’ 129.

⁹ Jack Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* (SLFCS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 139.

¹⁰ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 7; Fox, ‘Literacy,’ 129, respectively.

¹¹ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 328, see also p.8.

¹² Similarly, Lipiński, ‘Royal,’ 163: ‘A clear distinction should be made between the ordinary street scribes, who helped the illiterate, and the subordinate scribes of the palace or temple administration, on the one side, and the scribes who formed a narrow circle of state officials, on the other.’ On Torah shrines, see Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 190–91.

¹³ Snyder, *Teachers*, 5, defines ‘text-centered’ communities as ‘those groups who were fundamentally concerned to study, maintain, transmit a discrete set of authoritative texts.’

(or even end) their lives around a physical text to which they had limited—if any—access, the individual(s) who could access that text on their behalf naturally carried great authority. As one example of many, note the young rebels who chop Herod's golden eagle off the Temple in Josephus' *Jewish War* (1.648–655). According to Josephus, the rebels do so at the instigation of two experts (*sophistai*), who had suggested the idea during their 'lectures on the law' (1.649).¹⁴ The rebels attribute their authorization directly to the law (1.653) despite the fact that the two experts technically mediated this information. Whether historical or not, Josephus' portrayal of this event is a perfect example of both the high commitment to the law in some Jewish quarters and the high degree of power given to text-brokers (to be discussed shortly) in such cultures.¹⁵ In text-centred communities, an authoritative interpreter had not only the authority to read, write, conduct synagogue services, or teach, but also to inform the community on what it meant for them to be who they are (or should be).¹⁶ As the educated elite, they controlled the official channels of self-conception, and thus held a tremendous amount of power. In the case of the golden eagle incident, the *sophists* asserted that a Temple with Rome's eagle perched authoritatively over it contradicts the Jewish identity asserted in 'the laws of our fathers'; it therefore had to be removed, even at the cost of death. Apparently the *sophists*' status as 'experts in the law' is explanation enough for how they were able to convince the young rebels of what must be done in order to remain true to the law/their identity. In this sense, Carr is entirely correct to note that 'the literacy that most counted' in such a context was not necessarily reading and writing skills, but the mastery of (holy) texts that those skills enabled.¹⁷

¹⁴ Thackeray, LCL.

¹⁵ See Thatcher, 'Literacy,' 123–42. Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 196, criticizes Thatcher's identification of this group as a 'textual community' as 'so general . . . that it lacks all significance and becomes rather useless as a description of a particular sect's relationship to a sacred text,' apparently because 'most of them [the youths] will have been illiterate and unable to read and study the Torah themselves.' Hezser has here missed the point. *Despite* the fact that none of the rebels could read or study the text, they are (1) still willing to die for what someone else has told them is in it, and (2) identify the source of their actions as the text, not the interpreters. The rebels do not need to 'interpret the Torah in front of the populace' in order to be a textual community (quotation from Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 197). This is obvious even from Hezser's (second) quotation (on p.196) of Stock, *Implications*, 522, upon whom both she and Thatcher are dependent for the term 'textual community.'

¹⁶ Likewise, Bowman and Woolf, 'Literacy and Power,' 12: 'The spread of an elite culture obviously creates social caste markers and may also reinforce political and cultural coherence, or group identity.'

¹⁷ Carr, *Writing*, 13.

Significantly, even those who rejected the official authorities and/or offered, presumably, the most realistic alternative identity, did so upon the same pedagogical platform as co-literates (as, e.g., Isaiah 10.1, Jeremiah 8.8, the Qumran documents, Pauline epistles,¹⁸ and John 7.15¹⁹ demonstrate).²⁰ ‘Textual communities . . . develop in the context of a power struggle between literate innovators and the established institutes of social power.’²¹ Goody refers to such educated individuals as ‘gate-keepers of ideas’ and observes: ‘If the teaching of the skills of reading and writing is an intrinsic part of religions of the Book, its specialists inevitably acquire control of the input and output of a considerable segment of available knowledge.’²² This reality is heightened in the world that the NT reflects, since ‘no ancient society was more blatantly dominated by a written text than that of Jews in the Roman period.’²³ For a group to offer an authoritative statement on Jewish identity, therefore, they had to have an authoritative interpreter (or interpreters), a literate individual capable of accessing the sacred text.

1.2 The Brokering of Texts

In his *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society*, Saldarini argues that Pharisees and many scribes functioned within a retainer class, separate from the ruled Jews and the ruling Romans, yet dependent upon the latter for their own power.²⁴ Two of Saldarini’s observations are critical for the present discussion. First, Saldarini consistently notes that the primary difference between the majority of Jews and the constituents of the social groups²⁵ he analyzes is one of education, i.e.,

¹⁸ See the emphasis on Paul as an interpreter of texts in Watson, *Paul*.

¹⁹ Note the manner in which Jesus’ opponents associate his teaching with education. I return to this topic in Chapter Six.

²⁰ Consider also the observation of Stock, *Implications*, 522–3, that in ‘a series of relatively isolated outbursts of heresy’ in the medieval period, ‘the central motor of change was the literate interpreter of a text working with a less lettered community.’

²¹ Thatcher, ‘Literacy,’ 135; more fully, 135–9. Similarly, Bowman and Woolf, ‘Literacy and Power,’ 8.

²² Jack Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (SLFCS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), ‘gate-keepers of ideas’: 17; quotation: 18. See also Sawyer, *Sacred Languages*, 24.

²³ Goodman, ‘Texts,’ 99. Similarly, Sawyer, *Sacred Languages*, 5, 6.

²⁴ Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 41–42, 281, 284.

²⁵ ‘Social group’ is a general term that Saldarini further divides into different types of voluntary and involuntary groups in *Pharisees*, 62–67. It is not necessary here to distinguish sharply between, e.g., a ‘sect,’ ‘group,’ ‘association,’ ‘school,’ etc. My primary focus is scribes, who I do not

literacy.²⁶ He emphasizes that Pharisees and scribes were dependent upon their learned status for their social positions, especially those Pharisees and scribes portrayed in the gospels whose area of expertise was the Jewish law. Second, Saldarini observes that Pharisees and scribes thus functioned as ‘brokers’ between the illiterate majority and the world around them.²⁷ In this sense, the relationship between the Pharisees and scribes and the uneducated populace reflected a patron-client relationship, despite the fact that Pharisees and scribes themselves were, for Saldarini, technically the clientele of Rome’s patronage. For example, he says,

Since villages and towns existed within a larger society and empire, the mass of uneducated villagers needed wise and influential patrons to intercede for them with the bureaucracy. Such patrons are usually called *brokers*, that is, intermediaries between more powerful patrons or officials and the less powerful who depend on them. It is likely that the Pharisees and scribes, as leaders and perhaps low level officials, were perceived as brokers by the people in their dealings with the world at large.²⁸

As this quotation demonstrates, Saldarini conceptualizes the particular nature of this ‘brokerage’ in terms of Roman bureaucracy. He claims that the threat for the ‘uneducated and needy clients’ was often ‘larger and impersonal government taxes and regulations.’²⁹ Though Saldarini is correct to note that Pharisees and scribes functioned as brokers, and that this position was based upon their educated status as a group,³⁰ he has failed to note the most important aspect of their roles *as brokers*.³¹

consider to be a ‘coherent group’ (see below p.106). I will thus use ‘group’ and ‘sect’ interchangeably below. However, for precise definitions, see Baumgarten, *Flourishing*, 5–11; Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 62–75. In my estimation, the most useful definition of a ‘sect’ is the general one of Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 111, who uses it ‘as a neutral term for various groups in ancient Judaism that were distinctive and coherent enough to receive special epithets from outsiders or to bestow special epithets upon themselves.’

²⁶ Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 52, 56, 58, 74, 103–4, 120–21, 127, 148, 155, 162, 184, 186, 191, 196, 243, 281, 284. See also, Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 97, 98.

²⁷ Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 58, 74, 176.

²⁸ Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 58 (emphasis original).

²⁹ Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 74.

³⁰ Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 127, appropriately notes that while ‘we do not know how educated the Pharisees were as a group,’ they should still be considered as ‘learned leaders of the people.’ See further below page 96 and footnote 39.

³¹ This despite the fact that he elsewhere notes that Pharisees had earned the reputation as ‘unrivalled experts in their country’s laws’ (*Pharisees*, 103; citation of Josephus, *Life* 191) and that scribes were viewed as ‘teaching authorities in Jewish society’ (*Pharisees*, 160; referring to scribes in the Gospel of Matthew).

For the primary commodity that Pharisees and scribes brokered, and thus the primary source of their authority, was not Roman bureaucracy, but knowledge of the sacred texts of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Twelve years after Saldarini published his study, Snyder published *Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World*, an illuminating comparison between the respective book cultures of Stoics, Epicureans, Peripatetics, Platonists, Jews, and Christians. In this work, Snyder coins a term that is much more appropriate for the literacy landscape and social position of Second Temple Pharisees and scribes: ‘text-broker.’ Snyder employs this term in order to note the congruence between these distinct groups, whom he appropriately refers to as ‘consumers of texts.’³² Introducing his study, he says, ‘There is a bass line behind the whole [book] . . . namely, the idea of teachers as “text-brokers.” The appropriation of texts in the ancient world almost always involved some type of mediation by a trained specialist.’³³

The concept of text-brokers is extremely useful for scholarly conceptions of Jewish and Christian book culture, offering a critical difference from Saldarini’s conception of Pharisees and scribes as bureaucratic brokers.³⁴ Without demanding particularities such as precise literacy rates or sharp differentiation between different Jewish groups, it reflects the recognition of the core mechanism behind the importance and power of sacred literacy: on the one hand was a group of individuals for whom a particular text held intrinsic and identity-forming value; on the other hand was the text itself, which was all but inaccessible to the vast majority of those individuals. Between these two entities was a group (or multiple groups) of individuals who mediated that relationship, providing points of access to the text.³⁵ Since the text itself was identity-forming, the text-brokers likewise had the ability to shape the group’s self-conception. Their position as official mediators—as text-brokers—was created and reinforced by the fact that they were ‘trained specialist[s]’ and recognized as such.³⁶ Training in matters textual would have consisted of further literate education, which at least ninety percent of the population would not likely

³² Snyder, *Teachers*, 1.

³³ Snyder, *Teachers*, 11.

³⁴ Snyder has confirmed to me his independence in coining this term.

³⁵ Schwartz, *Imperialism*, thus speaks of ‘mediators of the Torah’ (72, 86, and elsewhere) or ‘a class of expert manipulators and mediators’ (74).

³⁶ Snyder, *Teachers*, 11.

have received.³⁷ Thus, even if some Pharisees were actually illiterate or had only begun pedagogical training, or even if a scribe had actually attained his title via patrimony,³⁸ an average Judean villager or visitor to Jerusalem would likely still recognize the entire group as literate, authoritative access points to the Holy Scriptures based on an assumed training in those texts.³⁹ Just as a farmer would need to turn to a village scribe in order to create a land mortgage or marriage contract, he would need to turn to a text-broker if he wanted to access/hear the Scriptures.⁴⁰ It was this recognized social authority that made literate groups such as Pharisees and scribes (and chief priests and Sadducees) leaders of the Jewish populace, which in turn led to their position as buffers between various localities and official imperial authority. That is, the position of Pharisees and scribes as bureaucratic brokers with Rome was actually dependent upon their position as text-brokers amongst their fellow Jews.

However, even amongst the various groups one could identify as Jewish text-brokers there would have existed various gradations of literacy. This chapter now turns to consider specifically the group whom PA's interpolator added to Jesus' opponents from John 7—the scribes. Importantly, this group of text-brokers are specifically associated with the ability to write, which was highest form of literacy in the ancient world and the literacy displayed by Jesus in John 8.6, 8.

2. Scribes and Grapho-Literacy

The NT offers a restricted image of scribes, primarily viewing them as experts in matters of the Hebrew Scriptures along the lines of the lauded scribe of Sir 38 and 39 who 'devotes himself to the study of the law of the Most High' (39.1, NRSV).

³⁷ See Chapter Three.

³⁸ Carr, *Writing*, 117, 130; Lipiński, 'Royal,' 163; Snyder, *Teachers*, 185. Cf. 1 Chronicles 2.55.

³⁹ Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 68, highlights the importance of the *public perception* of text-brokers: 'Local judges, teachers, scribes, and so on, *who were as far as most Judaeans were concerned the representatives of Torah, whether or not they were learned men who had studied the Pentateuch and learned how to interpret it*, necessarily had to confront all sorts of traditional local practices, which some of them may have sometimes tried to reconcile with the Pentateuch' (emphasis added). See also Carr, *Writing*, 288.

⁴⁰ This is not to claim that illiterates automatically accepted the validity of literate authority. See, for example, Richard Horsley, "'Like One of the Prophets of Old': Two Types of Popular Prophets at the Time of Jesus," *CBQ* 47 (1985): 444–5. The point here is that even to do this (create a counter-authority) is to acknowledge implicitly the authority of those one is opposing.

Indeed, only Acts 19.35 displays *οὐ γραμματεὺς*, *j* alternatively, here as a local official.⁴¹ In reality, the evidence from the time of Jesus demonstrates that Jewish scribes occupied a surprisingly broad spectrum of positions, though one of those was certainly that of a Torah scholar.

2.1 Scribes as Professional Writers

In the Second Temple period, Jewish scribes held positions ranging from village scribes to army officers to political and national elite.⁴² This variety stands in stark contrast to the designation of scribes as *Schriftgelehrte* ('Torah scholars'), a translation error that Bickerman attributes to Luther.⁴³ Schams traces the scholarly influence of this designation (which she terms an 'artificial category'⁴⁴ and Bickerman calls a 'phantom'⁴⁵) to Schürer's landmark and still-critical *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*.⁴⁶ However, the term *Schriftgelehrte* does not accurately reflect the evidence: 'It does not correspond to any category in ancient Jewish society but invited the conflation of evidence for a variety of different titles, roles, functions and positions.'⁴⁷ The result of this conflation of evidence is an overly-narrow conception of Jewish scribes. Schams claims, 'It is apparent that the main weakness of this strand of scholarship is the *equation* of scribes and Torah scholars, that is that all scribes were understood to be Torah scholars and all those with expertise in the Scriptures taken to be scribes.'⁴⁸ That is, while grapho-literacy often translated into participation in sacred literacy, it did not in every case.

In response to a strict conception of Jewish scribes as *Schriftgelehrte*, a number of more recent scholars have emphasized the common element between

⁴¹ G. Baumbach, 'grammateu, j, e, wj, o', *EDNT* 1.259; Joachim Jeremias, 'grammateu, j,' *TDNT* 1.740. Daniel R. Schwartz, "'Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites': Who are the 'Scribes' in the New Testament?" in his *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity* (WUNT 60; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 92, notes the scribe of Acts 19.35 as 'the only non-Jewish *grammateus* mentioned in the New Testament.'

⁴² See the recent and thorough study, Schams, *Jewish Scribes*; also Bar-Ilan, 'Writing,' 21–24; Lipiński, 'Royal,' 163.

⁴³ Bickerman, *Jews*, 163.

⁴⁴ Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 15, 24.

⁴⁵ Bickerman, *Jews*, 163.

⁴⁶ The English translation of this work has been revised and translated as *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)*.

⁴⁷ Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 16.

⁴⁸ Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 24 (emphasis original).

various Jewish scribes, namely their roles as professional writers.⁴⁹ These scholars focus upon the broader image of the *grammateu*, *j*, and here the following observation is pertinent:

The Greek word for scribe (*grammateus*) comes from the word *gramma* . . . [and in] various combinations this root in Greek refers to all aspects of writing and education. The word “scribe” in Hebrew, Greek and other languages had a wide range of meaning that changed over time and could denote several social roles.⁵⁰

Schams continues the trend of viewing Jewish scribes as professional writers, as she emphasizes that scribes’ social roles would have required expertise in reading and/or writing in each of the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman periods.⁵¹ As professional writers, there were a number of occupations and/or specializations available to a scribe. Thus, a more rounded image of Jewish scribes must acknowledge that some were employed as village clerks,⁵² some as military officials,⁵³ and some as specialists in the creation of legal contracts for various purposes.⁵⁴ That is, many Jewish scribes utilized their skill in matters wholly unrelated to the sacred text.

2.2 Some Professional Writers as Torah Experts

Though *Schriftgelehrte* is an inappropriate designation for Jewish scribes generally, the image of many Jewish scribes as Torah scholars remains an integral part of a fuller picture of Second Temple Jewish scribes. Indeed, this is the most important part of the picture with regards to the current study since the Synoptic Gospels portray the scribes as ‘professional exponents and teachers of the law.’⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Bickerman, *Jews*, 162–3; E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66BCE*, 172–82. See survey in Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 25–30. Note also that Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, 167, equates ‘scribal literacy’ with ‘the ability to compose.’

⁵⁰ Anthony J. Saldarini, ‘Scribes,’ *ABD* 5.1012.

⁵¹ Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 308–9, 312–3, 321–2, respectively. Schams also continues this scholarly trend by taking an exclusive methodological approach, identifying professional scribes only by titles or functions ‘requiring professional writing expertise’ (12).

⁵² Josephus, *J.W.* 1.479.

⁵³ 2 Kings 25.19; Isaiah 36.22; Jeremiah 52.25; 1 Maccabees 5.42; Philo, *Agr.* 148.

⁵⁴ The scribes of the Babatha cache (discussed in Chapter Three), who, if not Jewish themselves, were employed by Jews (similarly, Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 69, though on p.70 he claims they most likely were Jewish).

⁵⁵ G. H. Twelftree, ‘Scribes,’ *DNTB* 1086. Twelftree uses this description for Second Temple Jewish scribes generally, demonstrating the overly-narrow view of scribes that Schams and others critique. It is a proper designation for the scribes of the Synoptic Gospels, however.

That is, alongside of Jewish scribes accomplishing the day-to-day clerical work in various corners of the empire, and ‘probably partly identical with them, were scribes who were the academics of the day, experts in explaining the Torah and its meaning for their contemporaries.’⁵⁶ The authoritative status of these scribes most plausibly derived from their writing expertise in conjunction with the status of the sacred Jewish Scriptures. No text was more informative for Jewish identity in the time of Jesus than the Torah;⁵⁷ no literate competency was rarer than the ability to compose and copy intricate texts.⁵⁸ ‘The onus of producing a valid text, and therefore a sacred object, presumably lay entirely with the scribes,’ those capable of writing.⁵⁹ Millard claims scribes’ ‘major task was copying the Scriptures and so becoming closely acquainted with them.’⁶⁰ Goodman notes the likely authority and position of prestige that came to be attached to scribes whose responsibility was to produce copies of the sacred text: ‘Those pious scholars whose expertise in producing holy copies of the sacred texts was renowned may also by definition have been treated as authorities in other aspects of religious life. Hence, when scribes laid down their teachings, their words had power.’⁶¹

Jewish discussions of copying support the idea that scribal authority was based on their roles as copyists. According to *Jub.* 12.25–27, after Abram copies his father’s book in Hebrew and begins studying them he is able ‘to know everything which he was unable (to understand).’⁶² Philo claims that the one who ‘write[s]

⁵⁶ Millard, *Reading and Writing*, 168.

⁵⁷ Carr, *Writing*, 171, 275; George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins: Diversity, Continuity, and Transformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 29; Christopher Rowland, *Christian Origins: An Account of the Setting and Character of the Most Important Messianic Sect of Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1985), 46–49; Schürer, *History*, 2.314, 319; Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 49–74, 96–99, 240–43; Thatcher, ‘Literacy,’ 128; N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (COQG 1; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 227–30. See also the constant references to Torah in the succinct presentation of Second Temple texts by D. A. deSilva, ‘Writing and Literature: Jewish,’ *DNTB* 1289–99. Goodman, ‘Texts,’ 100, describes the Torah as ‘the sacred text *par excellence*.’ Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 59n.27, 61, can even speak of a ‘fetishization of the Torah scroll.’

⁵⁸ See Chapter Three.

⁵⁹ Goodman, ‘Texts,’ 107. See also W. D. Niven, ‘Scribe,’ *DAC* 2.460.

⁶⁰ Millard, *Reading and Writing*, 168. Likewise, Rowland, *Christian Origins*, 48.

⁶¹ Goodman, ‘Texts,’ 108. He also claims that the notion of scribal authority being unconnected with the writing down of texts ‘seems rather bizarre’ (103). Clearly, not all scribes are associated directly with writing in Second Temple literature and not all writers were scribes, but one should assume that the copyists of the Jewish sacred texts were scribes.

⁶² Wintermute, *OTP*.

with his own hand . . . wishes to have the ordinances cemented to the soul' and that he writes laws in a book 'in order to rewrite them straightway in my soul.'⁶³ Later on, *b. Soṭa* 20a describes the work of a copyist as divine work.⁶⁴ If these three views are at all indicative of Second Temple Judaism more broadly, it is not difficult to imagine how the guild of individuals responsible for producing copies of the Mosaic Law and other Scriptures would naturally attain a great deal of power and community respect as interpreters. Jeremiah 8.8 implicitly acknowledges scribes' ability to copy Torah as the source of their power while railing against them and accusing them of contorting Torah. In contrast, then, to village scribes producing legal contracts, in these instances a scribe's grapho-literacy both enabled and became a symbol of his participation in sacred literacy.⁶⁵

3. *The Scribes (and Pharisees) as Text-Brokers in the NT*

The preceding explanation of the particular type of scribal authority associated with scribes as sacred text-brokers (based on their grapho-literacy) leads to two further questions in light of the NT evidence.⁶⁶ First, if Torah scribes were associated with writing, why does the NT never portray them as such? Second, what is the significance of the frequent NT portrayal of Torah scribes as either members of or in conjunction with other Jewish groups/sects that also contained literate text-brokers? These questions are crucial for understanding Jesus' opponents as the combined 'scribes and Pharisees' of John 8.3.

⁶³ Philo, *Spec. Laws* 4.160, 163 (Colson, LCL), respectively. See also Quintillian, *Inst.* 11.2.32. Cf. Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.178.

⁶⁴ Twelftree, *DNTB* 1087, thus describes scribes as 'curators of the text.'

⁶⁵ I therefore affirm, with Goodman, 'Texts,' 99, that 'among Jews reading did not in itself bring power, but . . . writing—or at least writing of a particular kind—probably did.' Goodman's statement needs qualification, however. It is overstated since reading, and even further, public reading, were particular locations in the grid of literacy gradations, with gradations both below and above. His point, however, should not be missed because of this overstatement—in Roman Palestinian Judaism, scribal authority was based on the (perceived) level of literacy, and thus the (perceived) level of access to the holy text, attained by grapho-literacy particularly. Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 316–21, likewise affirms the likelihood of scribal authority being based on scribes' roles as copyists, though she is more cautious than Goodman or Millard (e.g., 321). She asserts that her model supports understanding scribal authority as such and that there is indirect evidence also in support of this theory (David, Ezra, and Moses being identified in Second Temple texts as scribes based on having written [324]), but notes the paucity of explicit statements on scribes as copyists of holy scrolls (attributing it to 'the limited interests of the authors and compilers' [319]).

⁶⁶ See n.5 above for my use of 'NT.'

3.1 Scribes as (Non-)Copyists in the NT

There are some peculiar silences in the historical record with regard to the scribes.⁶⁷ As one example, there is no division or tractate dedicated to scribes in the Mishnah.⁶⁸ The present study has frequently referenced another example—scribes appear nowhere in GJohn.⁶⁹ A third peculiar silence with regard to Jewish scribes is that the Synoptic Gospels never portray them as copyists of texts or explicitly employing grapho-literacy in any form.⁷⁰

One should be hesitant to conclude too much from the fact that scribal grapho-literacy never appears in the Synoptics, however. First, it is one thing to note that the texts never portray scribes as such and recognize this as a curiosity. It is quite another to take a further step and conclude that writing was unrelated to their social position and portrayal in NT texts. Herod the Great's direct dependence upon Rome is not *explicitly* stated in the NT either, but one should not therefore conclude that he was autonomous. Second, 'it goes without saying' that, for the scribes portrayed in the Synoptics, their activity centred upon the Torah.⁷¹ According to Matthew 23.2 (NRSV), 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat,' and 'significantly, Jewish tradition describes Moses as the scribe (*saфра*) par excellence.'⁷² Further, texts such as Matthew 2.4, Matthew 17.10//Mark 9.11, Mark

⁶⁷ Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 251–73.

⁶⁸ Jacob Neusner, *Judaism: The Evidence of the Mishnah* (2d ed.; BJS 129; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 234. Cf. Bar-Ilan, 'Writing,' 28, who references the rabbinic '*Massekhet Soferim* (Tractate for Scribes) . . . [which] though its final formulation is comparatively late, from the seventh of eight centuries C.E., most of its statutes are from the first centuries C.E., if not earlier.'

⁶⁹ Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 270, claims this silence stems from 'the author's generalization of the Jewish opposition or, alternatively, from his better knowledge of the realities of Palestinian Jewish society at the time of Jesus' (i.e., scribes had no real power). Neither of these options are particularly persuasive; nor is the suggestion of Schwartz, 'Scribes and Pharisees,' 94–95, that the Levites of John 1.19 are scribes (and thus that GJohn has chosen to refer to scribes as Levites instead of *grammatei*/j). There appears to be no clear explanation for why the author of GJohn categorically omitted scribes from his story of Jesus. The significant element for the present study, however, is that the Fourth Evangelist's omission of scribes (for whatever reason) significantly highlights PA's interpolator's inclusion of them.

⁷⁰ Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 162; Snyder, *Teachers*, 182.

⁷¹ Schürer, *History*, 2.324. Similarly, Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 155.

⁷² Schürer, *History*, 2.324. Likewise, Goodman, 'Texts,' 108; Geza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies* (StPB 4; Leiden: Brill, 1961), 51–52. The identification of Moses as the scribe *par excellence* is due to the fact that he recorded/engraved the law on Mount Sinai (see esp. Vermes, *Scripture*, 52), leading him to be regarded as the primary text-broker of the law (see further Chapter Eight). Despite this fact and his quotation above, Schürer fails to highlight the

12.28, 32, 35, and Luke 20.39, portray scribes as scriptural (Torah and Prophets) authorities. The most logical explanation for scribal authority in interpretive matters is the familiarity that the *grammatei*/j had with what the author of 2 Timothy refers to as the *i`era. gra,mmata* ('holy/sacred letters'; 2 Timothy 3.15).

While there is thus no reason to suspect that grapho-literacy was not attached to the authority of the Torah scribes of the NT, it does remain curious that those texts never portray them as such. This is most likely due to the intended audience of the NT writings. Even the texts that could possibly be addressed to a predominantly Gentile audience (e.g., Gospel of Mark or Luke-Acts) presume a level of familiarity with a Jewish worldview, as indicated by the fact that these stories are replete with allusions to and direct quotations of the Jewish Scriptures. For such an audience, it would be unnecessary—indeed superfluous—to state that Torah scribes were authorities based on their grapho-literacy. The illiterate majority would have recognized that the educated scribes could access the texts themselves and thus stood in a greater position to discuss and interpret those texts.

The writings of Josephus present an analogous situation of an intended audience determining the portrayal of Jewish scribes. Though Josephus refers to scribes almost thirty times,⁷³ he does not mention them as influential people or members of an influential group or use *grammateu*/j for experts in the Jewish scriptures.⁷⁴ Schams suggests a number of possible reasons for this, but the most plausible explanation is that Josephus portrays scribes according to his 'aim to explain Jewish society in a more intelligible way to his Greek non-Jewish audience.'⁷⁵ For the Greek audience Josephus addresses, scribes were functionaries whose grapho-literacy did not translate into sacred literacy. Though some Jewish scribes would have paralleled Hellenistic scribes in this regard, this was not the case for all of them, especially for those whose scribal literacy did translate into sacred literacy. And a Hellenistic conception of *grammateu*, j would have been

importance of copying/writing of the law for Jewish scribes in his description of their professional activities (*History*, 330–36), noting only at the end that 'care for the biblical text as such' became a task of the scribes 'in a later period' (336).

⁷³ Rengstorf, ed., *Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus*, 1.393.

⁷⁴ For example, in *J.W.* 1.649, the two experts in the law are *sofistai*, .

⁷⁵ Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 255. Likewise, Snyder, *Teachers*, 185.

decidedly insufficient for understanding the identity of the Jewish Torah scribe. Josephus therefore portrays scribes as his audience understood them.

Contrary to the writings of Josephus, the Synoptic Gospels aim to portray Jewish society (in this respect) on its own terms, even if portraying it as such for the benefit of Gentile readers. The scribes within these writings are influential members of society whose power resides in their presumed knowledge of Torah. That these experts in the Law of Moses (a Hebrew document⁷⁶) are designated as scribes suggests that their authority was rooted in the common element between various Jewish scribes—their professional writing expertise (grapho-literacy).⁷⁷ It is likely that even other Jewish text-brokers—whom one could describe as ‘trained in the Scriptures’ but perhaps did not or had not yet gained enough education to be able to write—would hold scribes in high esteem, recognizing that the ability to produce copies of the Torah was the result of further pedagogical training. To the pairing of scribes and other text-brokers—specifically the Pharisees—the present study now turns.

3.2 ‘The Scribes and the Pharisees’ and Other Groups

The combination of ‘the scribes’ and ‘the Pharisees,’ in one form or another, occurs eighteen times in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts.⁷⁸ It is clear from the NT and broader historical record that both scribes and Pharisees were text-brokers for the illiterate masses and regarded as official interpreters of Moses. In light of the broader NT usage of scribes in connection with Pharisees and other groups, in what

⁷⁶ Snyder, *Teachers*, 186: ‘The social leverage of scribes would be further enhanced by the fact that they were (presumably) able to read Hebrew, though fluency in the language, even among relatively educated students, may not have been universal.’ For similar observations on scribal knowledge of Hebrew, see Carr, *Writing*, 158, 169, and the legendary ‘revival’ of Hebrew in *Jub.* 12.25–27.

⁷⁷ The connection between literacy and scribal authority is almost entirely neglected by Schwartz, ‘Scribes and Pharisees,’ 89–100, who suggests ‘that the New Testament’s *grammateis* be viewed as Levites’ (99). *Pace* Schwartz, however, the most his study demonstrates is the (likely) possibility that *some* scribes in Second Temple Judaism were associated with the Levites. There is insufficient evidence to warrant the equation of NT scribes with Levites, however, and even less evidence that scribes and Pharisees in the NT ‘were competitors, representatives of two opposing schools’ (100). This is too static a view of Second Temple and NT scribes—some scribes likely opposed the Pharisees; others likely supported them. I take up this issue immediately in the main text.

⁷⁸ Matthew 5.20; 12.38; 15.1; 23.2, 13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29; Mark 2.16; 7.1; Luke 5.21, 30; 6.7; 11.53; 15.2; Acts 23.9. A. F. J. Klijn, ‘Scribes, Pharisees, High Priests, and Elders in the New Testament,’ *NovT* 3 (1959): 259–67, provides an assessment of these and other passages with regard to the Synoptic Problem.

follows I will consider the significance of the interpolator's inclusion of the scribes with the Pharisees in John 8.3. It should be noted at this point that this is not an attempt at a comprehensive explanation of each occurrence of scribes and/or Pharisees in the NT. Undoubtedly, some of these occurrences can be explained by, for example, an author's use of a source, and one should not associate any special understanding of the combination to that author. The focus here is upon providing a plausible explanation for why the interpolator included scribes at all. I will suggest that, in a number of instances, attaching scribes—as the most educated of Jewish text-brokers—to another Jewish group functions to buttress the interpretive authority of that group.

At least two issues are key for understanding the presence of the scribes with the Pharisees in John 8.3: (1) the frequent pairing of scribes with other groups; and (2) the nature of scribes as members of a guild rather than a distinct group or 'sect.' I will also here suggest that the Jewish scribes of the NT are analogous to modern lawyers.

3.2.1 Scribes and Other Groups

To begin understanding the significance of including the scribes with the Pharisees, one should note that associating scribes with another group is a widely-attested phenomenon in Jewish literature. Solely within the NT, scribes appear alone,⁷⁹ with the chief priests,⁸⁰ with the elders,⁸¹ with both the chief priests and the elders,⁸² with the chief priests and leaders (*prw/toi*) of the people,⁸³ with a group consisting of the rulers (*a;rcontaj*) alongside the elders and chief priests,⁸⁴ with prophets and sages,⁸⁵ and with the sage and 'debater of this age.'⁸⁶ Further, in some

⁷⁹ Matthew 7.29; 8.19; 9.3; 13.52; 17.10; Mark 1.22; 2.6; 3.22; 9.11, 14; 12.28, 32, 35, 38; Luke 20.39, 46.

⁸⁰ Matthew 2.4; 16.21; 20.18; 21.15; Mark 10.33; 11.18; 14.1; 15.31; Luke 20.19; 22.2; 23.10.

⁸¹ Acts 6.12.

⁸² Matthew 16.21; 26.57; 27.41; Mark 8.31; 11.27; 14.43, 53; 15.1; Luke 9.22; 20.1; 22.66.

⁸³ Luke 19.47.

⁸⁴ Acts 4.5–6.

⁸⁵ Matthew 23.34.

⁸⁶ 1 Corinthians 1.20. Ignatius, *Eph.* 18.1, omits the scribe when he references 1 Corinthians 1.20.

instances it appears that scribes somehow ‘belong to’ or are associated with Jewish groups. For example, Mark 2.16 references ‘the scribes of the Pharisees’ (oi` grammatei/j tw/n Farisai,wn).⁸⁷ Luke similarly portrays scribes who ‘belong to’ the Pharisees in Luke 5.30 (oi` grammatei/j auvtw/n; ‘their scribes’),⁸⁸ as well as scribes who are members of the Pharisaic party (tine.j tw/n grammate,wn tou/ me,rouj Farisai,wn) in Acts 23.9.⁸⁹ Matthew 2.4 references the ‘scribes of the people’ (grammatei/j tou/ laou/) in King Herod’s court. Matthew 7.29 claims Jesus was teaching differently from the scribes of the crowds (oi` grammatei/j auvtw/n; ‘their scribes’).

Moving beyond the NT evidence, Jewish scribes continue to be associated with different Jewish groups and organizations, also at times appearing to ‘belong to’ a group or person.⁹⁰ First Chronicles 24.6 references Shemaiah, ‘the scribe of/from the Levites’ (o` grammateu.j evk tou/ Leui). Josephus refers to the ‘scribes of the temple’ (oi` grammatei/j tou/ i`erou/),⁹¹ a ‘scribe of the *strategos* Eleazar’ (to.n grammate,a tou/ strathgou/ntoj vEleaza,rou),⁹² ‘Diophantos, scribe of the king’ (grammateu.j d v h=n o` Dio,fantoj tou/ basile,wj),⁹³ ‘Aristeus, scribe of the council’ (o` grammateu.j th/j boulh/j vAristeu,j),⁹⁴ and a scribe of Sacchias (to.n grammate,a auvtou/; ‘his scribe’).⁹⁵ Like Matthew 2.4, Joshua 1.10 and 1 Maccabees 5.42 both refer to the ‘scribes of the people,’ and in the Maccabean passage the scribes are somehow associated with the military. Similarly, 2 Kings 25.19 has ‘the scribe of the commander of the army’ (to.n grammate,a tou/ a;rcontoj th/j duna,mewj) and Isaiah 36.22 and Jeremiah 52.25 have a ‘scribe of the army’ (o` grammateu.j th/j duna,mewj). Philo associates

⁸⁷ This is the reading of B and et al. A C et al. read ‘scribes and the Pharisees.’ Ambrose, *Abr.* 1.4.23, identifies ‘the scribes of the Pharisees’ (*scribae Pharisaeorum*) as Jesus’ opponents in PA.

⁸⁸ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכְּבוּ et al. alter the wording of the phrase.

⁸⁹ Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 182, calls these scribes ‘an appendage to the Pharisees.’

⁹⁰ In some of the examples that follow, the scribes are not Torah experts.

⁹¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 11.128; 12.142.

⁹² Josephus, *Ant.* 20.208.

⁹³ Josephus, *J.W.* 1.529.

⁹⁴ Josephus, *J.W.* 5.532.

⁹⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 10.149.

scribes with the military as well when he claims an order was given through ‘the scribes of the army’ (tw/n th/j stratia/j grammate,wn).⁹⁶

The association of scribes with other groups or organizations is therefore a common occurrence in the NT and elsewhere. One may consider Mark 2.16’s ‘scribes of the Pharisees’ a ‘problematic expression’⁹⁷ given that the exact nature of their ‘belonging to’ the Pharisees is unclear.⁹⁸ But one cannot consider it irregular given the prevalence of ‘scribes of’ other groups.

3.2.2 Scribes as a Guild

Recognizing the common portrayal of scribes alongside other groups, yet distinguished from them, is important for scholarly conceptions of scribes. Sometimes scholars mention that only the NT portrays scribes as a solidified group. For example, Gerhardsson observes, ‘It is significant that the Jewish teachers (“the scribes”, oi` grammatei/j) are regarded in the New Testament as being a distinct class, worthy of mention alongside other groups such as the Sadducees, the Pharisees—and “the high priests.”’⁹⁹ As another example, Schams states,

Although the linguistic factor [i.e., portraying Jewish scribes in Greco-Roman terms, as does Josephus] explains a substantial part of the evidence it leaves unexplained why the authors of the Synoptics and Acts portrayed scribes as a *well-defined group* in first-century Judaism.¹⁰⁰

Saldarini observes similarly,¹⁰¹ and claims further, ‘We must not assume that references to scribes in the New Testament and elsewhere imply the existence of a unified group with a common identity and role.’¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Philo, *Agr.* 148.

⁹⁷ Snyder, *Teachers*, 184. The rest of the chapter will suggest that ‘scribes of the Pharisees’ is not quite the problematic expression Snyder considers it to be.

⁹⁸ Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 150, suggests the ‘scribes of the Pharisees’ in Mark 2.16 ‘may be the Jerusalem representatives’ of Pharisees.

⁹⁹ Birger Gerhardsson, *Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity* (trans. Eric J. Sharpe; combined ed. with *Memory and Manuscript*; BRS; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 21. Gerhardsson is closer to the case argued below with the sentence that immediately follows: ‘We conclude that for an observer *these men were noteworthy less as members of a particular party than as representatives of a professional teaching class!*’ (emphasis original).

¹⁰⁰ Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 286 (emphasis added). On p.255, she again references scribes as a ‘separate group.’

¹⁰¹ Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 3, 241.

These statements, however, and the problem of the NT portrayal of scribes as a ‘separate group’ (similar to the Pharisees and Sadducees and contrary to the rest of the historical evidence) they presume, is based upon the assumption that the texts of the NT do indeed portray scribes as a ‘separate group.’ In light of the above summary of scribes in the NT, though, one must strongly question this assumption. Scribes often appear as a group of their own, but they also often appear as a separately-distinguished part of a larger conglomerate. As a whole, they appear as they do elsewhere in the literary evidence—as fluid members of society who could function alone or in the company of another group. In narrative-critical terms, the scribes may function as a coherent collective character in the gospels, and in this sense appear similar to the Pharisees and Sadducees *as collective characters*.¹⁰³ Analyzing scribes in narrative-critical terms, however, is different from assuming that the authors of these texts considered them to be a ‘solidified group’ in Jewish society such as the Pharisees or Sadducees.¹⁰⁴

In this sense, the NT, along with other Jewish and comparative evidence, attests the fact that scribes are not a ‘group’ (or ‘sect’) at all but rather a guild.¹⁰⁵ Scribes were, in the strictest sense, craftsmen—practitioners of professional writing. The scribal craft led some scribes into the employ of emperors in their court, some into lowly positions as village scribes, and some into positions as authoritative brokers of a holy text. The NT image of scribes is thus not an exception to the otherwise socio-economically varied broader image of Jewish scribes, but rather a focused image, concerned only with those scribes whose professional writing activity concerned the Torah. For these scribes, their literate competency led them to be interpreters capable of rivalling other recognized text-brokers such as Pharisees and Sadducees. Since their particular qualification as text-brokers was their attainment

¹⁰² Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 242; cf. 275. Cf. also Gary G. Porton, ‘Diversity in Postbiblical Judaism,’ in *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters* (eds. Robert A. Kraft and George W. E. Nickelsburg; BIMI; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 60: ‘It is unclear whether we can even speak of the scribes as a single organized class of Jews.’

¹⁰³ For this approach, see Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, ‘The Jewish Leaders in the Gospel of Mark: A Literary Study of Marcan Characterization,’ *JBL* 108.2 (1989): 259–81.

¹⁰⁴ Similarly, ‘the crowd’ or ‘the people’ often function as collective characters, but there is never any indication that the gospel authors assume them to be a ‘sect’ or group.

¹⁰⁵ For classification of scribes as a ‘guild,’ ‘professional class,’ or group of ‘practitioners,’ see Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 113–4; Moore, *Judaism*, 1.41, 57, 309 [the first and third are in reference to Sir 38.24–39.11]; Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 884; Snyder, *Teachers*, 222; Stephen Westerholm, *Jesus and Scribal Authority* (ConBNT 10; Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1978), 26.

of the highest gradation of literacy, it is likely that—in matters concerning the holy text—they would have been viewed as ‘the experts of the experts.’ As Carr observes, ‘Education in . . . writing and mastery of core writings marks one as an insider among insiders in cultures that treasure such inscribed cultural memory.’¹⁰⁶ Groups such as Pharisees and Sadducees thus often found it beneficial to employ and/or contain within their ranks their own scribes.¹⁰⁷ Regarding ‘the scribes of the Pharisees’ in Mark 2.16, France observes,

While the expression *oi` grammatei/j tw/n Farisai,wn* . . . is unusual, it correctly represents the fact that within the larger Pharisaic party there were professional scribes, whose concern, even more than that of Pharisees in general, was to ensure correct observance of the law.¹⁰⁸

Given their fluid social position, there is no reason to doubt that Jesus’ opponents were at times scribes *and* groups/sects (‘scribes and the Pharisees’) and at other times scribes *within* groups/sects (‘scribes of the Pharisees’). It is also likely that Jesus’ opposition at times included ‘non-affiliated’ scribes and ‘affiliated’ scribes simultaneously.

In terms of the narrative portrayal of Jesus’ opposition, then, including scribes within the ranks of, or alongside, a structured Jewish sect would be claiming that Jesus’ interlocutors consisted not only of powerful Jewish text-brokers, but also the most learned of Jewish text-brokers. It is here important to reiterate that a number of passages demonstrate that gospel authors understood scribes as having a particular knowledge of the Jewish text and/or as being official teachers. In Matthew 2.4, it is the scribes (along with the chief priests) who inform Herod of the birthplace of the Messiah according to the Scriptures. According to Mark 9.11//Matthew 17.10 and Mark 12.35, it is the scribes who hold official opinions on Elijah and the Messiah. In Mark 12.28–34, it is a scribe who enters debate with Jesus regarding the greatest commandment. When the Sadducees question Jesus regarding Moses’

¹⁰⁶ Carr, *Writing*, 11.

¹⁰⁷ Thus, the observation of Schwartz, ‘Scribes and Pharisees,’ 91, that ‘the New Testament’s “scribes” at times function as secondary figures in the realm of law and law enforcement,’ needs qualification. While scribes were not necessarily the most powerful Jewish leaders and do appear as attachments to groups, their presence in and with those groups is due to the fact that—when it came to legal matters—they were ‘primary’ figures.

¹⁰⁸ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 134. Similarly, Rowland, *Christian Origins*, 69.

teaching on levirate marriage and Jesus responds by referencing Torah against them, it is the scribes who commend his exegetical savvy (Luke 20.39).¹⁰⁹ The authority of these Jewish scribes derived from their knowledge of the biblical text.

3.2.3. *Modern Analogies: Scribes as Secretaries and/or Lawyers*

Scholars commonly, and appropriately, compare the wide-ranging meanings of *grammateu, j* in the ancient world to the modern English word ‘secretary.’¹¹⁰ When it comes to the Jewish scribes of the NT and other Torah scribes, however, another modern analogy is more appropriate, that of a lawyer.¹¹¹ Like modern lawyers, Torah scribes gained their social authority based on their mastery of a body of literature; like modern lawyers, Torah scribes could have functioned alone, with other scribes, or been employed by various other interest groups as experts to help their respective causes;¹¹² like modern lawyers, Torah scribes could have been poor undertaking mundane work in a low-populated area or high-powered members of the cultural elite in an urban centre whose opinions affected the broader population; similar to modern lawyers, the presence of Torah scribes had the effect of making a set of proceedings more official in the minds of the participants.

In short, the presence of scribes alongside of or as part of a group of Jesus’ opponents would have been intended to buttress that group’s authority, since it now included the most educated and learned of Jewish text-brokers.¹¹³ The NT image of

¹⁰⁹ Since the Sadducees cite what Moses *wrote* in Luke 20.28 (as do the Pharisees, with the scribes, in John 8.5) and the Pharisees clearly reference Torah in Mark 10.2–4, Snyder, *Teachers*, 182–3, is curiously mistaken when he states: ‘Nowhere in any of the Gospels are Pharisees or Sadducees found quoting scripture nor is it implied that they do so’ (despite the fact that he discusses Luke 20.27–39 on p.183). It is still the case, however, that textual expertise is normally associated with the scribes.

¹¹⁰ Baumbach, *EDNT* 1.259; Jeremias, *TDNT* 1.740; Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 242; Saldarini, *ABD* 5.1012; Snyder, *Teachers*, 185.

¹¹¹ ‘Lawyer’ was also an appropriate analogy for NT authors: ‘Thus *nomiko, j* can stand in place of *grammateu, j* 9 times (of which 7 are in the Synoptic Gospels and 2, in a more general sense, in Titus 3:9, 13) and *nomodida, skaloj* can appear 3 times (of which 2 are in the Lukan literature and a more general usage in 1 Tim 1:7)’ (Baumbach, *EDNT* 1.259). Carr, *Writing*, 121, too offers the analogy of modern lawyers.

¹¹² This point is made independently of a similar observation by Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 98.

¹¹³ Due to space, the present study will not speculate upon the respective association of scribes with written Torah and Pharisees with oral Torah. However, Snyder, *Teachers*, 184, opines: ‘When Matthew speaks of the “scribes and the Pharisees,” it appears to be a circumlocution for “scribal interpretations of Torah and the traditions of the elders as purveyed by the Pharisees”: these office-holders are proxies for their respective areas of expertise, and thus represent the weight of interpretive authority of Torah in its widest sense, both written and unwritten.’ For more on oral and

scribes as Torah authorities is thus no doubt due to the authors' desire to portray Jesus as an authoritative text-broker in his own right, indeed as *the* authoritative text-broker.¹¹⁴ In terms of accomplishing this goal, having scribes who write divorce contracts as Jesus' opponents would have been less convincing than Torah scribes. The myopic image of Jewish scribes (as Torah scholars) in the NT is thus not surprising.

4. Summary and Conclusions

Chapter Three demonstrated that members of a group such as 'the scribes and the Pharisees' would have been among the few who had received an education in Second Temple Judaism. Further, that chapter showed that the task of scribes in particular—compositional writing and copying of intricate texts—was the result of possessing the highest form of literacy in the ancient world, i.e., grapho-literacy. The present chapter has assessed the particular social value of possessing grapho-literacy in Palestinian Judaism. In a text-centred society such as the one reflected in the NT, the practitioners of scribal, or sacred, literacy would have commanded authority—'In ancient society, access to texts and the ability to interpret them translated into significant social clout.'¹¹⁵ This authority was the natural outgrowth of their roles as text-brokers, mediating the holy texts to those incapable of accessing it for themselves. While both Pharisees and scribes were text-brokers, the presence of the latter in Gospel scenes ensured that Jesus' opponents included the most educated text-brokers in Jewish culture, buttressing the group's authority. Jewish scribes who used their scribal craft in matters of the Torah, then, can be compared—in their tasks, education, and possible social positions—to modern lawyers.

Understanding the intertwined nature of grapho-literacy and scribal literacy in the case of Jewish scribes is critical for the present study. When PA's interpolator

written Torah, see Martin S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE–400 CE* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹¹⁴ It is overwhelmingly likely that gospel portrayals of Jesus as a text-broker are broadly reflective of the historical situation(s) behind them. As Snyder, *Teachers*, 222, observes: 'Jesus probably did present himself as a text-broker, and it was this interpretive activity on Jesus' part . . . that contributed to his troubled relationship with the established guild of interpreters. We need not presume that Jesus offered radically different interpretations of scripture, though he may have done so at points. *But the simple fact that Jesus set himself up as an alternative point of access to authoritative texts would have been alarming to those who controlled the means of interpretation*' (emphasis added).

¹¹⁵ Snyder, *Teachers*, 215.

inserted PA between John 7 and 8, his inclusion of the Pharisees as Jesus' interlocutors is unsurprising. For, it is clear from the immediately-preceding narrative of John 7 that the Pharisees are the leaders of Jesus' opposition.¹¹⁶ But when the interpolator also placed the scribes next to the Pharisees, he did something at odds with the Johannine narrative as a whole, where the scribes are otherwise unattested. The present chapter has suggested a natural correlation between the interpolator's inclusion of the scribes and his portrayal of Jesus' grapho-literacy in John 8.6, 8. By including the scribes with the Pharisees, the interpolator has made certain that Jesus 'out-interprets' the most knowledgeable of Jewish text-brokers, and does so by demonstrating an (at least) equivalent level of scribal literacy—grapho-literacy. The following chapters will assess PA's portrayal of a grapho-literate Jesus in the narrative position of John 7.53–8.11, and will suggest that PA's interpolator was paying close attention to the Johannine context while making his unique contribution to the 'orthodox' image of Jesus.

¹¹⁶ In John 7, Jesus' adversaries consist of the Jews (7.1, 11, 13, 15, 35), the crowd(s) (7.12, 20, 40), the officers (7.32, 45), the chief priests (7.32, 45), and the Pharisees (7.32, 45, 47, 48). It is clear from 7.32, 45, and 47–52, however, that the Pharisees, along with or including the chief priests, are the primary power behind official resistance to Jesus and his teaching.

Chapter Five

The *Pericope Adulterae* at John 7.53–8.11: The Location

‘Now, here is a mystery, or rather, here are several mysteries! A good story, characteristic of Jesus, but with a very uncertain origin, and a varied history.’¹

The present chapter will argue that PA first entered into canonical Jesus tradition at John 7.53–8.11. Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight will then consider why the interpolator chose this location. The contention of these four chapters is that PA’s presence at this location is neither happenstance nor inexplicable, contrary to the assumption of some text-critical and tradition-historical studies on PA.² The following discussion will assess the manuscript and patristic evidence, as well as consider why and how PA’s numerous alternative locations arose.³

When it comes to demonstrating diversity of locations in the manuscript tradition, PA is without peer. At present, scholars are aware of at least twelve different manuscript locations of PA within the canonical gospels. Considering PA’s numerous manuscript locations, Heckel surmises that PA appeared in a variety of places ‘ehe sie ihre Ruhestätte als Anhang zu Joh 7 fand.’⁴ Amidst this wide variety, however, and *contra* Heckel, there are at least three reasons to consider PA’s traditional location as its first location in what would become canonical tradition: (1) John 7.53–8.11 is, by far, the majority location for PA in the manuscripts; (2) John 7.53–8.11 is the earliest demonstrable location for PA in both the manuscript

¹ Frederick A. Schilling, ‘The Story of Jesus and the Adulteress,’ *ATHR* 37 (1955): 92.

² See survey in Keith, ‘Recent,’ n.p.

³ I will thus be arguing directly against, e.g., Walter Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (THKNT 2; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1959), 245: ‘Kirchenväter und alte Textzeugen erweisen, daß weder diese Stelle ihr ursprünglicher Platz ist noch sie überhaupt zum Johannes-Evangelium gehört hat.’

⁴ Theo K. Heckel, *Vom Evangelium des Markus zum viergestaltigen Evangelium* (WUNT 120; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 136. My thanks to Dieter Roth for bringing Heckel to my attention.

tradition and extrabiblical citations of the story; and (3) of the late alternative locations, at least some are due to the impact of lectionary readings.⁵

Known Manuscript Locations for PA⁶

Manuscript(s)	Location of PA	Date of (Earliest) Manuscript
Majority of MSS, earliest of which are: Vulgate; Codex D; Old Latin <i>e ff² j aur r¹</i>	John 7.53–8.11	384 CE ⁷
<i>f¹</i> ; Armenian manuscripts ⁸	End of GJohn	9 th /10 th century; late 9 th century
Georgian MSS: Tbilisi Institute H 1741; St. Catherine's 16; Vatican Library 1	John 7.44	10 th –11 th century
115 476 1349 et al.	After John 8.12	10 th century

⁵ The second and third points clearly carry more weight for my argument than the first. The sections of this chapter addressing them will demonstrate that John 7.53–8.11 is the location that best explains the alternative locations, cohering well with the established text-critical principle of preferring the reading that best explains the others (see Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* [4 ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005], 300).

⁶ This table is based on the evidence presented in Kurt Aland et al., eds., *Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments V. Das Johannesevangelium: 1. Teststellenkollation der Kapitel 1–10* (ANTF 35, 36; 2 vols.; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 2.211–215, which provides a full listing of manuscripts. See also Robinson, 'Preliminary,' 42.

⁷ Note that the date of 384 CE is based on the assumption that, like the rest of the Vulgate tradition, the manuscripts Jerome presented to Pope Damasus (J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* [London: Duckworth, 1975], 88) would have included PA at John 7.53–8.11.

⁸ See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 188n.1, where he provides Erroll F. Rhodes' translation of a comment in Zohrab's edition of the Armenian text. Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Textual Criticism* (trans. Erroll F. Rhodes; 2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 205, and Bruce M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament: Their Origin, Transmission, and Limitations* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 158–61, show that the earliest Armenian manuscripts date from the ninth century, though this may be too early for PA's appearance in these manuscripts since the comment translated by Rhodes also claims that 'six of the older manuscripts' omit PA entirely (i.e., contain it neither at John 7.53–8.11 nor at the end of the gospel).

1333 corrector	End of Gospel of Luke	11 th century (MS date)
f ¹³	After Luke 21.38	11 th century
196 240 244 et al.	After John 8.12a	12 th century
225 1128	After John 7.36	12 th century
284 second corrector	After John 10.36	13 th century (MS date)
981	After John 8.20	13 th century
286	After John 8.13	1432 CE
2691	After John 8.14a	15 th century

1. John 7.53–8.11 is the Majority Location for PA

My counting of the manuscripts listed in *Text und Textwert* that include PA in one form or another (including eighteen that include 7.52–8.2 but omit the rest of the story), yields a total of 1427 manuscripts of inclusion.⁹ For some reason, MS 115 is not included in the witnesses that place PA after John 8.12, and with this added it gives a total of 1428 manuscripts.¹⁰ One must take this number as tentative, subject to revision as more evidence becomes known, and only indicative of the Greek manuscripts. It is, however, heuristically crucial. Fifty-eight manuscripts (again, including 115) contain PA at an alternative location.¹¹ This means 95.9% (1370/1428) of Greek manuscripts that contain PA place it at John 7.53–8.11, an overwhelming majority even when one allows for unknown manuscripts that may attest other alternative locations.¹² That John 7.53–8.11 is the dominant location

⁹ Aland et al., *Text und Textwert*, 2.211–214. Prior to this work’s publication, Robinson, ‘Preliminary,’ estimated 1350 continuous-text manuscripts of inclusion.

¹⁰ For MS 115, see Daniel B. Wallace, ‘Reconsidering “The Story of Jesus and the Adulteress Reconsidered,”’ *NTS* 39 (1993): 292n.5.

¹¹ Though they will not here be added to the totals for the Greek manuscripts, J. Neville Birdsall, ‘The Pericope Adulterae in Georgian,’ in *StPatr* 39 (eds. F. Young, M. Edwards, and P. Parvis; Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 188–9, cites three Georgian texts (Tbilisi Institute MS H 1741, St. Catherine’s Monastery Georgian MS 16, Vatican Library Georgian MS 1) that contain PA at John 7.44. Information on the number of Georgian manuscripts that contain PA at John 7.53–8.11 is not immediately available, and thus one cannot generate what percentage of PA occurrences these three manuscripts represent.

¹² Possible alternative locations exist but are not included here for lack of concrete evidence. The eleventh-century MS 1006 claims that PA is from the *Gos. Thom.* (See Bart D. Ehrman, ‘Jesus and the Adulteress,’ *NTS* 34 [1988]: 40n.25). A famous statement in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.17,

within the manuscript tradition, however, only attests PA's affinity with that location and/or its popularity in the church, not necessarily that it is the original location. For stronger evidence that John 7.53–8.11 is the original location, one must look at both the manuscripts and the patristic authors who knew the story of the adulteress.

2. *John 7.53–8.11 is the Earliest Demonstrable Location for PA*

Comments by Ambrose and Jerome reveal that these writers read PA in GJohn, though they do not reveal exactly where in that narrative the story appeared. PA's precise location, however, is revealed by contemporaneous Greek and Old Latin manuscripts, Jerome's placement of PA in the Vulgate, and the running commentaries by Augustine. The manuscript evidence will be discussed prior to the patristic authors, and a methodological note is necessary here. Significant weight is given in this discussion to the date of manuscripts that include PA. This may seem to ignore the textual reality that the reading contained in any given manuscript, insofar as it reflects the exemplar and/or archetype, may be much older than the manuscript itself.¹³ In the case of PA's inclusion, however, one is dealing with an example

suggests that PA (or a similar story) is from the *Gos. Heb.* However, no known manuscripts or fragments of either work (or other works that may have gone by the same names, e.g., *Inf. Gos. Thom.* in the case of the former and *Gos. Eb.* or *Gos. Naz.* in the case of the latter) include or reference PA. Herman C. Waetjen, *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple: A Work in Two Editions* (New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 233n.36, claims PA 'appears in manuscripts of Mark (after 12:17)' and cites as evidence Grundmann, *Evangelium*, 245–7. However, neither on these pages nor in his defence of treating PA after Mark 12.17 (223–4) does Grundmann cite *manuscripts* that place PA after Mark 12.17. Hermann Freiherr von Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments in ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt auf Grund ihrer Textgeschichte* (2 vols.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1911–1913), 1.2.719, relates some MSS that omit PA. In a correction to this sentence on 1.3.2150, he adds (his) MS 1288 [Gregory MS 560; see 1.1.167] to this list with the following note: '1288 (nach Mk. 1–6).' Kurt Aland, 'Glosse, Interpolation, Redaktion und Komposition in der Sicht der neutestamentlichen Textkritik,' in his *Studien zur Überlieferung des Neuen Testaments und seines Textes* (ANTF 2; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1967), 44n.1; repr. from *Apophoreta: Festschrift für Ernst Haenchen* (eds. W. Eltester and F. H. Kettler; BZNW 30; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1964) 7–31, took this to mean that von Soden claimed PA occurred after Mark 6 in MS 560, considered this statement 'höchst fragwürdig,' and states that an initial examination of 560 could not confirm von Soden. Later on, Ian A. Moir, 'Fam. 272: A New Family of Manuscripts in the "Pericope Adulterae" (John 7,53–8,11)?' in *Text and Testimony: Essays on New Testament and Apocryphal Literature in Honour of A. F. J. Klijn* (ed. T. Baarda et al.; Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J. H. Kok, 1988), 172n.11, examined MS 560 and found nothing to support this idea either, and reported that PA occurs at 7.53–8.11 in this MS. Von Soden's reference therefore remains a mystery. He was dependent upon around forty colleagues for collecting readings from MSS in libraries all over the world (see Aland and Aland, *Text*, 22), and it may be that he simply received bad information in this case. For other connections between PA and various gospel traditions, see Keith, 'Recent,' n.p.

¹³ See, e.g., Léon Vaganay and Christian-Bernard Amphoux, *An Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (trans. Jenny Heimerdinger; 2d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 63–64.

where a scribe purposefully did not follow his exemplar. Thus, in this instance, one must focus primarily on the date of the manuscript that provides sure evidence of PA's inclusion. The exception here is the acceptance of the date of 384 CE for PA's presence in the Vulgate (on which see below and cf. Jerome, *Pelag.* 2.17).

2.1 The Manuscript Evidence

Jerome completed work on the Gospels for his Vulgate by 384 CE when he presented them to Pope Damasus.¹⁴ There is widespread agreement based on the Vulgate manuscript tradition that PA was at John 7.53–8.11 in these manuscripts but none from this period have survived. Thus, Codex D (Bezae), which Parker dates to ca. 400 CE,¹⁵ is the earliest certain manuscript to include PA, and does so at John 7.53–8.11. The remaining manuscripts that include the pericope can be dated from the seventh century to the fifteenth century, with the vast majority of these manuscripts dating closer to the twelfth century.¹⁶ Other fifth-century witnesses of PA at John 7.53–8.11 are in the Old Latin textual tradition, *e* and *ff*.¹⁷ The Old Latin tradition also provides a witness in the sixth century with *j* and two from the seventh century with *aur* and *r*.¹⁸ There is thus ample textual evidence that PA was known in the Latin-speaking world at John 7.53–8.11 from the 380's CE and continued to be associated with that position.

The earliest suggested alternative location for PA in the textual evidence is its placement at John 7.44 in the Georgian tradition.¹⁹ Toensing claims,

¹⁴ Kelly, *Jerome*, 88.

¹⁵ D. C. Parker, *Codex Bezae: An Early Christian Manuscript and Its Text*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 281.

¹⁶ These include: 28 180 205 579 597 700 892 1006 1010 1071 1243 1292 1342 1505.

¹⁷ Another fifth-century witness, *b*, is lacunose here, but may have included PA. See William L. Petersen, 'OUDE EGW SE [KATA]KRINW. John 8:11, the *Protevangelium Iacobi*, and the History of the *Pericope Adulterae*,' in *Sayings of Jesus: Canonical and Non-Canonical: Essays in Honour of Tjitze Baarda* (eds. William L. Petersen, Johan S. Vos, and Henk J. De Jonge; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 194n.16. Petersen speculates that *b* could have been included after John 7.44 (as some Georgian manuscripts from ca. tenth century do), but it equally could have followed 7.52. The leaves of the manuscript are missing at this point in GJohn.

¹⁸ The remaining Old Latin text that includes the pericope is *c* and it dates from the twelfth or thirteenth century. Philip Burton, *The Old Latin Gospels: A Study of their Texts and Language* (OECT; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 26, dates *aur* to the second half of the eighth century.

¹⁹ See note 11 above. On the Georgian manuscript tradition generally, see J. Neville Birdsall, 'The Georgian Version of the New Testament,' in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary*

The manuscript evidence for placing the pericope in gospel texts other than after John 7:52 is found beginning in the seventh century. Earliest among this evidence are several Georgian version manuscripts (geo²) of the seventh century [that] support the insertion of the pericope after John 7:44.²⁰

Toensing cites the Alands as support for the seventh-century date of geo², who state that geo², a revision of geo¹, 'was made after the separation from the Armenian church in the early seventh century.'²¹ However, *contra* Toensing, geo² does not actually contain PA, either after John 7.44 or at 7.53–8.11. The designation 'geo²' refers to the Opiza, Tbet', Džruč, and Parhal Georgian manuscripts; 'geo¹' refers to the Adysh manuscript.²² Blake and Brière collated the Adysh, Opiza, and Tbet' manuscripts in their *The Old Georgian Version of the Gospel of John*, and it is clear in their edition that PA is not included in these manuscripts of the Georgian GJohn.²³ Shanidze collated the Opiza manuscript along with the Džruč and Parhal manuscripts of geo² in his *Two Old Recensions of the Georgian Gospels*, and similarly PA is not included here either.²⁴ Thus, PA appears nowhere in geo¹ or geo². Presumably, Toensing has confused geo² with the later Athonite Georgian revisions of Saints George and Euthymius. In these documents, text critics prior to and since Toensing have located PA's presence in the Georgian tradition. Streeter claimed that PA

Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis (eds. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes; SD 46; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 173–87.

²⁰ Holly Joan Toensing, 'The Politics of Insertion: The Pericope of the Adulterous Woman and Its Textual History' (PhD diss., University of Vanderbilt, 1998), 2n.1. Curiously, Toensing goes on in this note on alternative locations to cite the speculation of Rodolphe Kasser, 'Les dialectes coptes et les versions coptes bibliques,' *Biblica* 46 (1965): 304, that PA entered into Coptic manuscripts ca. seventh century CE. However, Kasser does not mention any alternative locations for PA, nor does he even offer manuscript evidence for his assertion on the date of PA's inclusion into Coptic tradition.

²¹ Aland and Aland, *Text*, 205.

²² Joseph Molitor, 'Das Neue Testament in georgischer Sprache,' in *Die alten Übersetzungen des Neuen Testaments, die Kirchenväterzitate und Lektionare: Der gegenwärtige Stand ihrer Erforschung und ihre Bedeutung für die griechische Textgeschichte* (ed. K. Aland; ANTF 5; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1972), 315–6. See also Maurice Brière, 'Limitations of Georgian in Representing Greek,' translated by Metzger in his *Early Versions*, 199, and Metzger's discussion of the manuscripts on p.186–90.

²³ Robert P. Blake and Maurice Brière, eds., *The Old Georgian Version of the Gospel of John: From the Adysh Gospels with the Variants of the Opiza and Tbet' Gospels* (PO 26; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1950), 515.

²⁴ A. Shanidze, *Two Old Recensions of the Georgian Gospels According to Three Shatberd Manuscripts (A.D. 897, 936 and 973)* (MOGL 2; Tbilissi: Academy of Sciences, 1945), 326–7. See further, Birdsall, 'Pericope Adulterae,' 185; Metzger, *Early Versions*, 188–9; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 188.

entered the Georgian tradition via ‘George the Athonite in his revision, c. 1045,’ and four years after Streeter, Blake et al. supported this also.²⁵ More recently, however, Birdsall has shown that the earlier revision of Euthymius the Athonite (d. 1028), George’s predecessor, included PA at John 7.44, as evidenced in Tbilisi Institute’s MS H 1741.²⁶ The difficulty surrounding the problem of when PA was inserted in the Georgian text is clear when one considers that, according to Birdsall, Euthymius’ text appears in parallel in the 1979 critical edition of I. Imnaishvili,²⁷ but that it is ‘established on the basis of two manuscripts: Tbilisi Institute of MSS A 28 . . . [and] H 1741,’ the former of which does not contain PA and the latter of which contains it after John 7.44.²⁸ Euthymius and George were both late tenth-century figures, and thus one must date PA’s John 7.44 location in their manuscripts to this period, *pace* Toensing.

PA’s presence at John 7.44 in the Georgian manuscript tradition therefore joins the tenth-century MS 1582 from *f*¹, which places PA at the end of GJohn, as a representative for PA’s earliest alternative location.²⁹ One can push PA’s location at the end of GJohn to the ninth-century with *f*¹ MS 565 if the ‘faded introduction’ to PA stands as a witness to its inclusion.³⁰ Worth note, here, however, is that the *f*¹ manuscripts most likely witness to a scribe’s failure to include PA at John 7.53–8.11 (and default relocation of the story at the end of the gospel); i.e., not a scribe’s placement of PA in another gospel context. The scribe of MS 565 claims he purposefully did not follow his exemplar in inclusion of PA.³¹ Thus, it seems that

²⁵ B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1924), 89; Kirsopp Lake, Robert P. Blake, and Silva New, ‘The Caesarean Text of the Gospel of Mark,’ *HTR* 21.4 (1928): 293n.36, respectively.

²⁶ Birdsall, ‘Pericope Adulterae,’ 188–9. See also footnote 11 above. Birdsall made this information known before he published it—see Metzger, *Early Versions*, 198n.3; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 188n.4. For a still-useful introduction to Euthymius the Athonite and George the Athonite, see R. P. Blake, ‘Georgian Theological Literature,’ *JTS* 26 (1925): 54–58.

²⁷ Cited by Birdsall, ‘Pericope Adulterae,’ 186n.3.

²⁸ Birdsall, ‘Pericope Adulterae,’ 188.

²⁹ Again, Robinson, ‘Preliminary,’ 42, presents the data helpfully.

³⁰ Wieland Willker, ‘A Textual Commentary on the Greek Gospels Vol. 4b: The Pericope de Adultera: Jo 7:53–8:11 (Jesus and the Adulteress), 5th ed.,’ 5: ‘Maurice Robinson comments, “The PA text of 565 is now completely lacking, with only the beginning of a faded introduction to the PA being present (this introduction appears similar to what appears in MS 1). The last page is missing (or never was completed; the microfilm only goes to the point described).”’ Cited 12 December 2007. Online: <http://www-user.uni-bremen.de/~wie/TCG/TC-John-PA.pdf>.

³¹ Parker, *Living Text*, 96; Schilling, ‘Story,’ 92.

the tenth-century Georgian manuscripts that include PA at John 7.44 witness the earliest true alternative location for PA in a gospel narrative.³² The main point of the present discussion, however, is that PA was known at John 7.53–8.11 and maintained relative stability at that location until hundreds of years later, when its multiple alternative locations began to proliferate by and beyond the tenth century. Before moving forward to why a scribe might have moved PA from John 7.53–8.11, it is necessary to corroborate the manuscript evidence with fourth- and fifth-century evidence from Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine.

2.2 The Patristic Evidence

When it comes to knowing precisely in *which* gospel the Fathers read PA and *where* in that gospel they read it, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine offer the most helpful statements. Ambrose confirms a Johannine location while Jerome and Augustine confirm the specific location of John 7.53–8.11.

Ambrose is particularly significant for the present discussion because he is the first Christian writer to remark upon Jesus' acts of writing in PA, the main subject of this thesis. In a letter dated between 385–387 CE, he claims that PA is located in GJohn, and also remarks that the story is, by his time, quite familiar in Christian communities. In *Epistle* 68 (26), he writes, 'Numerous times the question [regarding bishops' involvement in secular courts, specifically concerning capital punishment] has been raised, and well known, too, is the acquittal of the woman who in the Gospel according to John was brought to Christ, accused of adultery.'³³ It is clear, then, that Ambrose knows PA in GJohn,³⁴ and further evidence makes it probable that Ambrose read PA at John 7.53–8.11. He may allude to a 7.53–8.11

³² Similar to the *f*¹ manuscripts that place PA at the end of GJohn, the manuscripts that relocate PA to follow John 8.12 or 8.13 are not true alternative narrative locations for PA. As Aland et al., *Text und Textwert*, 2.214, show, these texts maintain PA's 7.53–8.11 narrative location, but place either 8.12, 8.12a, 8.12–13, or 8.12–14a in front of PA. This was most likely done to preserve the unity of the lectionary reading, as some of these manuscripts include 8.12 or 8.12–13 both before and after PA. See discussion of MS 115 below on p.129.

³³ Ambrose, *Epistle* 68 (26) (Beyenka, FC).

³⁴ Cf. R. W. Muncey, *The New Testament Text of Saint Ambrose* (TS 4, 2d series; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 46–47, who places PA at John 7.53–8.11 in his reconstruction of Ambrose's NT. Ambrose identifies PA's location as generally 'in the gospel' in a number of locations. See his *Abr.* 1.4.23; *Apol. Dav. Altera* 1.1, 2.5. The latter locations are particularly interesting, since Ambrose identifies the source as the 'gospel reading' (*euangelii lectio*, *euangelica lectio*, respectively), and states in *Apol. Dav. Altera* 1.1 that this gospel reading is one 'which has been gone over' (*quae decursa est*). Presumably this means that Ambrose finds this passage in a lectionary reading, as suggested to me by Paul Parvis.

location when, while discussing PA, he references verses that follow PA immediately in John 8. In *Epistle* 68 (26), Ambrose likely cites John 8.15 when he claims that if Jesus had condemned the adulteress he would have contradicted his purpose of coming to forgive humanity's sins. He intensifies this point by continuing, 'Indeed, furthermore he said, "I judge no one."' ³⁵ Although this quotation could be a reference to John 3.17, 5.30, or 7.24, the precise wording (*ego non iudico quemquam*) suggests 8.15, and therefore that Ambrose supports his point further by citing a statement of Jesus from PA's immediate context. Similarly, in *Epistle* 64 (74), Ambrose refers to Jesus as the 'Sun of Justice' who pours 'forth the full light of His grace [and] says to you: "Go thy way, and from now on sin no more."' ³⁶ If Ambrose read PA at John 7.53–8.11, it is no coincidence that he attributes the words of 8.11 to a 'sunny' and 'light' Jesus, since Jesus claims to be 'the Light of the World' in John 8.12. ³⁷ One may need more straightforward evidence before drawing a certain conclusion, but in light of the additional factor that both Jerome and Augustine clearly read PA at John 7.53–8.11, it is a sound assumption that this was where Ambrose read it as well.

Jerome's inclusion of PA at John 7.53–8.11 in the Vulgate by 384 CE slightly antedates Ambrose's letters as the earliest piece of evidence for PA at this location. According to Jerome, already by his time one could find PA in numerous copies of GJohn. He says, 'In the Gospel, according to John, there is found in many of both

³⁵ The Latin here (68.11.104) reads 'Denique supra ait: *Ego non iudico quemquam*.' Note that I have translated *supra* as an adverb of amount or degree ('furthermore'), *contra* Beyenka (FC), who translates 'He said *earlier* . . .' and thus gives a spatial meaning to *supra*, creating the possibility that Ambrose claims to read John 8.15 'earlier in GJohn' than PA. This possibility is unlikely. First, the fact that Jesus claimed to judge no one punctuates Ambrose's point that Jesus came to forgive sins, and thus the translation of 'furthermore/further/indeed' for *supra* is the most natural. Second, amongst extant manuscript evidence, there are only two locations of PA *after* John 8.15 and all attesting manuscripts are too late for Ambrose to have read (see chart at the beginning of this chapter). The only manuscript with an early enough date for either possibility is Codex B, which, though not a member of *f*¹, may attest PA's location after John 21.25 with a marginal umlaut. Since a similar umlaut occurs at John 7.53, PA's early connection with GJohn generally and John 7.53–8.11 specifically is maintained even under this possibility. See further Keith, 'Recent,' n.p.

³⁶ Ambrose, *Epistle* 64 (74) (Beyenka, FC).

³⁷ Following her translation of this passage, Beyenka footnotes 'John 8.11–13,' suggesting that this entire thought from Ambrose derives from a manuscript in which John 8.12 immediately follows PA.

the Greek as well as the Latin copies, the story of the adulteress who was accused before the Lord.’³⁸

Augustine twice includes PA in running commentary on GJohn, unambiguously demonstrating that his manuscripts included the story of the adulteress at John 7.53–8.11. In *Tractate 33* of his *Tract. Ev. Jo.*, he proceeds from discussing Nicodemus’ chastisement by the other Pharisees at the end of John 7 to Jesus’ teaching on the Mount of Olives at the opening of PA, even including the transitional verse of John 7.53 (‘And each one went to his own house.’).³⁹ After describing the hostile encounter between the scribes and the Pharisees and Jesus, Augustine ends this tractate with Jesus’ non-condemnation of the adulteress and some pastoral comments. *Tractate 34* then returns to the gospel text with Augustine’s comments upon John 8.12.⁴⁰

Likewise, in Augustine’s *Cons.*, he follows a discussion of John 7 with PA, which precedes his statements on John 8.12.⁴¹ At *Cons.* 4.16, he describes John 7.3, and then begins *Cons.* 4.17 as such:

Again, how weighty are the things which this evangelist reports Jesus to have spoken, when He came back to the temple from Mount Olivet, and after the forgiveness which He extended to the adulteress, who had been brought before Him by His tempters, as one deserving to be stoned. . . .⁴²

Following a few statements regarding Jesus’ acts of writing in PA, to which we will return in the final chapter of this thesis, Augustine again demonstrates PA’s location of John 7.53–8.11 when he says, ‘Accordingly, after these incidents, He affirmed Himself to be the light of the world . . . ,’ a clear reference to John 8.12.⁴³ These two texts of Augustine leave little doubt as to where PA occurred in the copies of GJohn that he considered authoritative, even though, like Jerome, he was aware of copies that omitted the story.⁴⁴

³⁸ Jerome, *Pelag.* 2.17 (Hritz, FC). Note that Jerome’s statement implies his knowledge of manuscripts that do not include PA.

³⁹ Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 33.2–3.

⁴⁰ Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 34.2.

⁴¹ Augustine, *Cons.* 4.16–17.

⁴² Augustine, *Cons.* 4.17 (Salmond, *NPNF*¹).

⁴³ Augustine, *Cons.* 4.17 (Salmond, *NPNF*¹).

⁴⁴ See Augustine, *Incomp. nupt.* 2.5.

Worth note in relation to Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome is the *Synopsis Scripturæ Sacræ*, a text that is difficult to date precisely but was attributed dubiously to the fourth-century Athanasius. Whether contemporary with these other church fathers or slightly later, Pseudo-Athanasius is another witness to PA at John 7.53–8.11. In his survey of GJohn, he mentions PA just after discussing Nicodemus’ argument with the Jewish leadership at the end of John 7 and just before quoting John 8.21b.⁴⁵

Other early Christian writers offer vague references to PA’s location in their manuscripts. Didymus the Blind reads PA ‘in certain gospels’ (ἐν τισιν εὐαγγελίοις) in fourth-century Alexandria.⁴⁶ In fourth-century Barcelona, Pacian locates the story in a ‘gospel’ when he challenges the Novationists.⁴⁷ Fifth-century Peter Chrysologus claims the story of the accused adulteress is ‘in the Gospel.’⁴⁸ Sixth-century Cassiodorus claims that Jesus’ statement from John 8.11 (‘Go and sin no more.’) is in ‘the gospel.’⁴⁹ Equally ambiguous is Cassiodorus’ reference to PA’s author as ‘the evangelist.’⁵⁰ Each of these authors clearly quotes PA as fully-authoritative Scripture, but without more explicit evidence their statements allow no further conjectures as to PA’s home in the manuscripts they read.⁵¹ Importantly, however, and though one may desire more specificity, their statements do not contradict the argument above that John 7.53–8.11 was PA’s earliest manuscript location in the fourfold canon.

⁴⁵ PG 28.401–2.

⁴⁶ For text, see Ehrman, ‘Jesus and the Adulteress,’ 25; A. F. J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition* (VCSup 17; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 118.

⁴⁷ Pacian of Barcelona, *Epistle ad Sympronianum* 3.20.1 (Hanson, FC).

⁴⁸ Peter Chrysologus, *Sermon 115* (Ganss, FC).

⁴⁹ Cassiodorus, *Explanation of the Psalms* 31.2 (Walsh, ACW).

⁵⁰ Cassiodorus, *Explanation of the Psalms* 56.7 (Walsh, ACW). Since Cassiodorus proceeds to quote verbatim John 8.5 it is more likely that he knows PA at John 7.53–8.11 than that he knows it elsewhere.

⁵¹ Others of the relevant time period who cite PA but do not reveal its location include: Ambrosiaster, *Quæstiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti* 102 (PL 35.2307//CSEL 50.199; fourth century); Hilary of Poitiers, *Commentaire sur le Psaume 118* 8.9, 15.10 (fourth century); Gelasius, *Lettre contre les Lupercales* 5 (fifth century); Leo the Great, *Sermon 62* 4 (fifth century); Gregory the Great, *Commentaire sur le Premier Livre des Rois* 98.2; and *Morals on the Book of Job* 1.16, 14.34 (late-sixth century). Worth note also as a possible fourth-century witness that does not reveal PA’s location is the Pachomian *Draguet Fragment 1*. This text quotes John 8.7 at paragraph 4, although the manuscript witness is from the eleventh century (see Armand Veilleux, trans., *Pachomian Koinonia: The Lives, Rules, and Other Writings of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples* [2 vols.; Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981], 2.3–4, 111).

Therefore, both the manuscript evidence and patristic evidence confirm that PA's earliest demonstrable location in GJohn is at John 7.53–8.11. The Vulgate, Codex D, and the Old Latin tradition offer textual evidence for this location from the 380's on. Comments from Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine corroborate this evidence. *At least* by the mid-fourth century, then, PA had been inserted into John 7.53–8.11 and began to be copied in that location, though Chapter Nine will propose an earlier date for the original insertion. While manuscript 565 from *f*⁴ suggests that scribes had placed PA at the end of GJohn in lieu of John 7.53–8.11 by the ninth century, the earliest attested alternative location in a gospel narrative is from the tenth century, and from this point PA's manuscript location in the canonical tradition begins to vary considerably. If John 7.53–8.11 is demonstrably the majority location, and demonstrably the earliest location (and the *only* narrative location in the extant evidence until the tenth century), how is it that PA came to be dislodged from that position?

3. *The Impact of the Lectionary System*

The question of how PA was displaced from John 7.53–8.11 is partly unanswerable in the current study. It is beyond the scope of the present study to consider how and why scribes placed PA in *each* of its varying locations in the gospel manuscripts. Given the late date of the manuscripts, the results of pursuing such questions would have no immediate impact upon this study, which is concerned only with PA's initial entrance into canonical tradition at John 7.53–8.11 and how it functioned there. It is possible, however, to give some account of how and why scribes placed PA in *some* of its alternative positions, and thus offer a fuller picture for the textual history of this passage in canonical tradition. Though normally ignored in PA scholarship, the most likely explanation for many of the alternative locations is the influence of lectionary reading of the gospels.

3.1 *Knowledge of GJohn With and Without PA in Early Christianity*

In order to understand PA's multiple locations and the influence of the lectionary system, one may begin with the fact that PA is not authentic Johannine material.⁵² The story of Jesus and the adulteress initially confronted early Christians in some context other than GJohn. Papias likely knows of PA ca. 125 CE, and,

⁵² See Keith, 'Recent,' n.p.

depending on how one translates the Greek, either he or Eusebius attributes it to ‘the Gospel according to the Hebrews’ (το. κατ’ Ἑβραίων εὐαγγέλιον).⁵³ Eventually, however, an interpolator inserted PA into GJohn at John 7.53–8.11. This insertion created a situation where multiple early Christian authors acknowledge both PA’s presence in GJohn *and* that some manuscripts contain it while others do not. Though, as shown above, Augustine knows PA at John 7.53–8.11, he also knows that it is not in every manuscript and resolves this problem by asserting that weak men have excised the passage.⁵⁴ Likewise, Jerome cites the story of the adulteress from GJohn, places it at John 7.53–8.11 in his Vulgate, but also notes that it is found in ‘many’ of the Greek and Latin manuscripts; thus not all.⁵⁵

PA’s presence in the Philoxenian Syriac manuscript tradition also confirms that the Greek manuscripts from which Syriac translations derived included PA at John 7.53–8.11 when they included it, but manuscripts of omission were also known. The *Syriac Chronicle* attributed to Zacharias Rhetor (=Zachariah Mitylene), whose final redaction is dated to 569 CE, contains a statement regarding PA that acknowledges a Johannine location and possibly manuscripts of omission: ‘Now there was inserted in the Gospel of the holy Moro the bishop, in the eighty-ninth canon, a chapter which is related only by John in his Gospel, and is not found in other manuscripts. . . .’⁵⁶ It is not exactly clear from this translation of the *Syriac*

⁵³ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.17. Of the fragmentary remains of the *Gos. Heb.*, none includes PA. There is little about this statement that is not debated, including whether it actually refers to PA, exactly which work ‘Gospel of the Hebrews’ refers to (i.e., *Gos. Heb.*, *Gos. Eb.*, or *Gos. Naz.*), and, as noted, whether Papias or Eusebius knows PA in this text.

⁵⁴ Augustine, *Incomp. nupt.* 2.5.

⁵⁵ Jerome, *Pelag.* 2.17.

⁵⁶ Zacharias Rhetor, *Chronicle* 8.7 (Hamilton and Brooks). This Syriac text, whose final composition is dated to the sixth century, is a translation of an earlier Greek text. Thus, the oft-quoted statement of Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 188, that ‘No Greek Church Father prior to Euthymius Zigabenus (twelfth century) comments on the passage, and Euthymius declares that the accurate copies of the Gospel do not contain it,’ is incorrect. (Robinson, ‘Preliminary,’ 47, has questioned the latter part of Metzger’s statement, regarding Euthymius’ estimation of PA’s textual status.) It is also possible that Nikon’s Greek *On the Impious Religion of the Vile Armenians* is earlier than Euthymius, if one should identify ‘S. Niconi’ as the tenth-century Armenian Nikon. Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, ‘Notes on Select Readings,’ in *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Introduction and Appendix* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1881), 82, are doubtful of this identification. For the text of ‘S. Niconi,’ see J. B. Cotelerius, ed., *Ss. Patrum, Qui Temporibus Apostolicis Floreuerunt, Barnabæ, Clementiis, Hermæ, Ignatii, Polycarpi Opera, Vera, et Suppositicia; Unâ cum Clementis, Ignatii, Polycarpi Actis atque Martyriis* (2 vols.; 2d ed.; Amsterdam: R. & G. Wetstenii, 1724), 1.237–9.

Chronicle whether the author means that PA is not found in other *gospel* manuscripts or other manuscripts of *GJohn*. However, the Syriac manuscripts that Gwynn presents resolve this question. Among these manuscripts are texts corresponding to and including the *Syriac Chronicle*, which likewise include a prefatory note before PA that attributes its discovery and translation again to Bishop Mara. Of these, for example, (Gwynn's) MS *f* refers to PA as 'a chapter which peculiarly belongs to John, and is not found in all copies.'⁵⁷ More importantly, however, is another collection of manuscripts whose introductory comments attribute PA's translation into Syriac from Greek to 'Abbat Paul.' In (Gwynn's) MS *a*, the introduction reads, 'This *Syntaxis* is not found in all the copies; but the Abbat Mar Paul found it . . . and translated it from Greek into Syriac, as it is written here; from the Gospel of John.'⁵⁸ (Gwynn's) MS *e* is even more specific as to the textual location in its further comment: 'It is after the [words], "Search and see that prophet out of Galilee ariseth not" (St. Joh. vii. 52), that it is thus written.'⁵⁹ MS *f*'s introduction includes the statement that PA follows John 7.52, but also offers a geographical provenance for the pericope: 'A section that was found in Alexandria (*or*, in an Alexandrian [copy]), after the verse "Search and see [sic] prophet ariseth not."⁶⁰

Therefore, some Syriac texts attribute PA's entrance into their manuscripts to Abbat Paul while others attribute it to Bishop Moro/Mara. All agree, however, that a reader could find the story in *GJohn* but that not all copies of *GJohn* include it. The only specific location ever given for the pericope is John 7.53–8.11. Combined with the comments from the Western Fathers, this evidence confirms further that the *single* explicit manuscript location for PA in the narrative of *GJohn* until the tenth century is John 7.53–8.11. Beyond this, the evidence demonstrates that, in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, it was common knowledge for many Christian authors and leaders that some copies of *GJohn* contained PA while others did not.

3.2 Scribal Confusion

⁵⁷ John Gwynn, ed., *Remnants of the Later Syriac Versions of the Bible* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1909), 47.

⁵⁸ Gwynn, *Remnants*, 41.

⁵⁹ Gwynn, *Remnants*, 42. Here and below, any parenthetical or bracketed comments belong to Gwynn.

⁶⁰ Gwynn, *Remnants*, 42. See above footnote.

In the process of copying texts, then, Christian scribes were left in a quagmire: Some exemplars contained PA and some did not. Scribes attest this conundrum by several methods, chiefly by using text-critical markers to note their suspicion. A few scholars suggest that the diacritical umlaut between John 7 and John 8 in Codex B implies that the scribe knows PA at this location, but does not copy it either because his exemplar does not contain it or he regards it as inauthentic.⁶¹ Summarizing other manuscript evidence, Parker says,

A few copies of the Byzantine text use symbols taken from Alexandrian scholarship to indicate that a passage is probably an interpolation. Some of these manuscripts place the first marker not at verse 53 but at 8.2 or 8.3, showing that they regarded the first couple of verses as genuine. Many of these also contain a note indicating that not all copies have the passage.⁶²

In a similar vein, Metzger states, ‘Significantly enough, in many of the witnesses that contain the passage it is marked with asterisks or obeli, indicating that, though the scribes included the account, they were aware that it lacked satisfactory credentials.’⁶³ As already mentioned, the scribe of MS 565 noted that he purposefully did not include the pericope though his exemplar did,⁶⁴ and instead he likely placed the story at the end of GJohn by default.

Given that scribes were unsure or sceptical of PA’s canonical status and its presence in John 7.53–8.11, it is easy to imagine that they would then take the further

⁶¹ Jennifer Wright Knust, ‘Early Christian Re-Writing and the History of the *Pericope Adulterae*,’ *JECS* 14.4 (2006): 489; Jennifer Wright Knust, ‘Jesus, an Adulteress, and the Development of Christian Scripture,’ in *A Tall Order: Writing the Social History of the Ancient World: Essays in Honor of William V. Harris* (eds. Jean-Jacques Aubert and Zsuzsanna Várhelyi; Munich: K. G. Saur, 2005), 61; Philip B. Payne, ‘Fuldensis, Sigla for Variants in Vaticanus, and 1 Cor 14.34–5,’ *NTS* 41 (1995): 252; Philip B. Payne and Paul Canart, ‘The Originality of Text-Critical Symbols in Codex Vaticanus,’ *NovT* 42.2 (2000): 112; Robinson, ‘Preliminary,’ 40.

⁶² Parker, *Living Text*, 96. Aland, ‘Glosse,’ 43, lists 195 manuscripts (ninth–eighteenth centuries CE) that express doubt regarding PA’s textual status.

⁶³ Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 189. Likewise, Eldon Jay Epp, ‘Issues in the Interrelation of New Testament Textual Criticism and Canon,’ in *Canon Debate*, 509–10. These manuscripts date variously from the Eighth Century to the Twelfth Century. Among the majuscule witnesses to the pericope in this category are E L and S. Miniscules marking the PA’s questionable status are 1 225 1424 1333 and *f*¹³. The remaining witnesses in this category belong to the lectionaries and include *l* 184 *l* 211 *l* 387 *l* 514 *l* 751 *l* 773 *l* 890 and *l* 1780. *Contra* Metzger, Robinson, ‘Preliminary,’ 46, and T. van Lopik, ‘Once Again: Floating Words, Their Significance for Textual Criticism,’ *NTS* 41 (1995): 290, suggest that the asterisks and obeli are not text-critical markers but rather part of the lectionary equipment.

⁶⁴ Parker, *Living Text*, 96; Schilling, ‘Story,’ 92.

step of exercising some scribal freedom and placing it in a location deemed more suitable for the passage. Indeed, this is the argument of Ross, who acknowledges scribal confusion regarding PA and further claims that the passage was ‘later restored by copyists who knew it to be genuine but did not know what was its proper location.’⁶⁵

Ross gives only brief consideration to PA and its textual history (about half a page), as he discusses it alongside five other NT examples of ‘floating words,’ that is, ‘longer passages thought to be additions to the text [that] appear in different places in different manuscripts.’⁶⁶ The connotation of ‘floating’ is that PA is somehow wandering aimlessly through the textual tradition without a proper anchor or guide,⁶⁷ and some discussions of PA’s many manuscript locations reflect this sentiment. Wallace says, ‘Early scribes, in sensing the richness and authenticity of the *pericope adulterae*, groped for an appropriate place to put it.’⁶⁸ In this theory, Christian scribes were utterly convinced of PA’s authenticity and searched confusedly—‘groped’—for an appropriate location within the gospel manuscripts to place it, thus producing the array of locations. Likewise, Morris claims, ‘It seems clear enough that those scribes who felt it too important to be lost were not at all sure where to attach it.’⁶⁹ While not mentioning scribal confusion, McLachlan still attributes PA’s manuscript locations in Lukan and Johannine gospel tradition to ‘the state of the text in the second century and its *free handling by scribes*.’⁷⁰

Van Lopik criticizes Ross heavily for describing PA as a ‘floating’ tradition based upon its variety of manuscript locations in a response to Ross’ article:

As far as floating single words or short phrases are concerned, textual critics will generally subscribe to this conclusion. But so far as it concerns longer passages, Ross’s conclusion seems debatable. . . . In

⁶⁵ J. M. Ross, ‘Floating Words: Their Significance for Textual Criticism,’ *NTS* 38 (1992): 155.

⁶⁶ Ross, ‘Floating Words,’ 154.

⁶⁷ Riesner, *Jesus*, 231, refers to PA as a *Wanderperikope*.

⁶⁸ Wallace, ‘Reconsidering,’ 292.

⁶⁹ Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 883. Similarly, Aland, ‘Glosse,’ 45; Gary M. Burge, ‘A Specific Problem in the New Testament Text and Canon: The Woman Caught in Adultery (John 7:53–8:11),’ *JETS* 27.2 (1984): 144; Gench, *Back*, 142; Josep Rius-Camps, ‘The Pericope of the Adulteress Reconsidered: The Nomadic Misfortunes of a Bold Pericope,’ *NTS* 53.3 (2007): 382.

⁷⁰ Herbert McLachlan, *St. Luke: Evangelist and Historian* (London: Sherratt and Hughes, 1912), 112 (emphasis added).

this note I do not intend to enter into the question of whether the six floating passages discussed by Ross are authentic or spurious. My only aim is to demonstrate that two of the passages discussed by Ross [Luke 22.43–44 and PA] are floating because they were used in the liturgy.⁷¹

According to van Lopik, the more plausible explanation for PA's occurrence in alternative locations is the influence of liturgical readings of the gospels on continuous-text manuscripts.⁷² Van Lopik is not alone in noting this liturgical influence, however, and this crucial issue deserves more attention in studies of PA's textual history. The present study thus now turns to consider the impact of lectionary reading on PA's textual history.

3.3 Lectionary Influence

The general influence of the lectionary system on non-lectionary texts is and has been well recognized.⁷³ Sometimes when scribes produced new continuous-text manuscripts from a continuous-text exemplar that had been marked in lections, the new manuscript reflected the lectionary practice (although not technically a lectionary text). Van Lopik specifically contends that this is the cause of PA's relocation in MSS 225, 115, and *f*⁴³. In the case of MS 225 (dated 1192), which places PA after John 7.36, van Lopik claims the solution is much simpler than Ross and Wallace's proposal that the scribe knew PA to be genuine but did not know where to put it. After observing that 'minuscule 225 is a lectionary containing a full, continuous Gospel text, not a selection of lessons,' van Lopik claims that PA was dislodged from its normal location of John 7.53–8.11 and placed after John 7.36 because 'John 7.37–52, 8.12 is the lesson for Pentecost.'⁷⁴ Thus, 'Minuscule 225 excises the PA from the lesson of Pentecost. But it inserts the PA after 7.31–6,

⁷¹ van Lopik, 'Once Again,' 286.

⁷² Likewise, Robinson, 'Preliminary' 43–46.

⁷³ See, e.g., Ernest Cadman Colwell, 'Method in the Study of the Gospel Lectionary,' in *Prolegomena to the Study of the Lectionary Text of the Gospels* (eds. Ernest Cadman Colwell and Donald W. Riddle; SLT 1; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 18, 19; Bruce M. Metzger, 'Greek Lectionaries and a Critical Edition of the Greek New Testament,' in Aland, *Die alten Übersetzungen*, 495; Carroll D. Osburn, 'The Greek Lectionaries of the New Testament,' in *Text of the New Testament*, 61, 70–71; Allen Wikgren, 'Chicago Studies in the Greek Lectionary of the New Testament,' in *Biblical and Patristic Studies in Memory of Robert Pierce Casey* (eds. J. Neville Birdsall and Robert W. Thomson; Freiburg: Heider, 1963), 119. Aland, 'Glosse,' 45, shows no awareness of lectionary influence in his discussion of PA's alternative locations.

⁷⁴ van Lopik, 'Once Again,' 289, 290, respectively.

another passage passed over in the series of lessons in the movable liturgical calendar.’⁷⁵

Concerning MS 115 (tenth or twelfth century⁷⁶), van Lopik states, ‘In the case of 115 there is no reason to speak of PA “floating” at all.’⁷⁷ MS 115’s scribe proceeds from John 7.52 to 8.12, then writes PA, then 8.12 again.⁷⁸ Van Lopik surmises:

I think that what happened can be described as follows. The scribe wrote out 8.12 twice: after 7.52 as the end of the lesson of Pentecost and before 8.13 as the beginning of the lesson of the Thursday of the fourth “Johannine” week. A similar repetition of a passage for liturgical reason is found in the numerous manuscripts which, in the lesson from Luke 8 . . . repeat Luke 8.8b after 8.15. Further examples are of course to be found in 225, which offers the whole pericope John 13.3–17 twice, and in the manuscripts which give Luke 22.43–4 in two different places.⁷⁹

(Though neither Wallace nor van Lopik mention it explicitly, it is important for the present study to note that, though MS 115 is witness to an alternative location, it technically has not moved PA from John 7.53–8.11 but rather inserted 8.12 prior to PA. That is, PA’s affinity with John 7.53–8.11 is manifest even in this liturgically-influenced text.) Thus, van Lopik accounts for the mysterious occurrences of PA after John 8.12 in MS 115 and after John 7.36 in MS 225 as manifestations of a larger liturgical influence on gospel texts that he observes in numerous locations. He similarly accounts for PA’s presence after Luke 21.38 in *f*⁴³.

In *f*⁴³ (none earlier than eleventh century), PA occurs after Luke 21.38, beginning with the connective John 7.53 stating that ‘each one went to his own home,’ which provides a much more awkward narrative disruption in this location

⁷⁵ van Lopik, ‘Once Again,’ 290. On p.289, van Lopik shows how the story of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet in John 13.3–17 occurs in MS 225 in its normal location and after Matthew 26.20, ‘because the Byzantine liturgy prescribes the reading of this pericope both for the ceremony of foot-washing on Maundy Thursday and as part of the ordinary lesson of that day.’ On reduplication of passages as a characteristic of the lectionary text, see also Colwell, ‘Method,’ 15; Bruce M. Metzger, ‘A Comparison of the Palestinian Syriac Lectionary and the Greek Gospel Lectionary,’ in *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Matthew Black* (eds. E. Earle Ellis and Max Wilcox; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1969), 219; Metzger, ‘Greek Lectionaries,’ 491.

⁷⁶ Wallace, ‘Reconsidering,’ 292n.5.

⁷⁷ van Lopik, ‘Once Again,’ 290.

⁷⁸ Text presented by Wallace, ‘Reconsidering,’ 292n.5.

⁷⁹ van Lopik, ‘Once Again,’ 290.

than the supposed disruption when PA follows John 7.52.⁸⁰ The manuscripts in this group that contain PA after Luke 21.38 are perhaps the most obvious example of lectionary impact.⁸¹ Though Wallace attributes PA's relocation after Luke 21.38 to the parallel portrayals of Jesus' teaching in the temple, van Lopik aligns himself with Metzger and Wikgren,

who have pointed out that the location of the PA in fam 13 is a blatant example of the influence of the Byzantine lectionary system on the text of the New Testament. Luke 21.12–19 is to be read on 7 October, the feast of Saints Sergios and Bakchos; the day after, on 8 October, the PA is to be read on the feast of Saint Pelagia.⁸²

Van Lopik's rhetoric perhaps presents an unnecessary false choice, since it is thoroughly plausible that the lectionary system recognized the narrative resonances between Luke 21.37–38 and John 8.1–2. Indeed, it is hard to think that the parallels were completely unrelated—beyond the 'teaching' and 'temple' similarities, one must also notice the presence of the Mount of Olives and 'all the people' (pa / j o` lao, j) in each text (Luke 21.37–38; John 8.1–2). Nevertheless, it is clear that PA, when it is to be found in the menologion, is normally read on October 8, St. Pelagia's day.⁸³ Beyond this, and though (surprisingly) van Lopik does not cite him, it was Colwell who first posited that PA's presence in *f*¹³ was due to liturgical reading. He says,

It is my opinion also that the location of the story of the adulteress at the end of Luke 21 in fam 13 is due to lectionary influence. For in the

⁸⁰ For *f*¹³'s text of PA in Luke, see Jacob Geerlings, *Family 13—The Ferrar Group: The Text According to Luke* (SD 20; Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1961), 128–9. Interestingly, this family presents Jesus' writing in John 8.6 with *gra, fw* instead of *katagra, fw*, though MS 174 has the compound verb as a variant. For the simple verb at John 8.6 in lectionary texts, see also Allen Paul Wikgren, 'The Lectionary Text of the Pericope, John 8:1–11,' *JBL* 53 (1934): 190–91, though the compound appears as variants here as well. Chapter Seven will treat the textual variants more fully.

⁸¹ Rius-Camps, 'Pericope,' 379–405, disregards this point in an unwarranted fashion. He claims that lectionary influence is an unpersuasive explanation for PA's multiple manuscript locations because 'the development of the lectionary system occurred only after the seventh century' (385). This chapter has demonstrated that there is no manuscript evidence prior to the tenth century for an alternative location. Furthermore, one cannot posit that, for example, the *f*¹³ manuscripts that contain PA in Luke's Gospel are based on an ancient exemplar traceable to a period prior to the rise of the lectionary system, since there is no way to speculate at which stage of transmission PA entered *f*¹³. That is, even if those manuscripts are based on ancient exemplars, that does not mean that the exemplars contained PA.

⁸² Wallace, 'Reconsidering,' 292; van Lopik, 'Once Again,' 291 (quotation); Metzger, 'Greek Lectionaries,' 495; Wikgren, 'Chicago Studies,' 119n.46, respectively.

⁸³ See the table provided by Wikgren, 'Lectionary Text,' 189.

lectionaries this passage is omitted from John (as it is in fam 13) and appears most frequently on October 8th; while the gospel lection for October 7th is Luke 21:12–19. Is it mere coincidence that this pericope appears in fam 13 at the first suitable point after Luke 21:19? Is it not probable that its location at the end of Luke 21 in this family is due to its appearance in this position in the menologion of the gospel lectionary?⁸⁴

The solution that van Lopik and Colwell offer is a much more plausible explanation for how PA was relocated to its alternative locations in MSS 225, 115, and *f*¹³ than is the solution of, for example, Ross, who sees the guiding force behind PA's alternative locations as scribes who were convinced of PA's authenticity but unsure of a proper location. PA's presence in these locations was therefore not due to confusion but to a deliberate scribal choice.

Therefore, though the manuscripts under consideration are continuous-text manuscripts, as Wikgren notes, 'The lectionaries often and quite clearly influenced the text of non-lectionary MSS,' and PA is one example of this phenomenon.⁸⁵ Beyond the manuscripts discussed immediately above, it is also possible that this is the cause of the relocation of PA to John 7.44 in the Georgian manuscripts. Birdsall claims that work on the Georgian lectionaries 'has scarcely begun,' but observes that the removal of Mark 14.33–37a and its relocation to the end of GJohn is due to lectionary influence.⁸⁶ He does not mention PA in this regard, but his observations do raise that possibility. However, it is not necessary here to account for every alternative location.⁸⁷ It is clear that several of the alternative manuscript locations for PA are due to lectionary influence. While this offers some text-critical perspective for how PA was removed from its original location, none of these manuscripts can be dated as early as PA's presence in GJohn at 7.53–8.11, as attested by Codex D, Old Latin manuscripts, Jerome, and Augustine, and indeed they are many centuries removed. Thus, one cannot maintain the notion that early Christian scribes had, on the one hand, a loose tradition about Jesus and the adulteress that they

⁸⁴ Colwell, 'Method,' 19. In the same volume, Donald W. Riddle, 'The Character of the Lectionary Text of Mark in the Week-Days of Matthew and Luke,' in *Prolegomena*, 22, affirms Colwell's position.

⁸⁵ Wikgren, 'Chicago Studies,' 119.

⁸⁶ Birdsall, 'Georgian Version,' 176, generally 176–7.

⁸⁷ Though possible, there does not seem to be sufficient evidence to support Robinson, 'Preliminary,' 45, who claims, 'All the PA relocations among the continuous-text MSS reflect a desire and intent to preserve the continuity of the Pentecost lesson as a unit' (emphasis added).

considered authentic and worthy of a gospel location, and, on the other hand, various possible locations to place this rogue tradition. A more probable explanation of the available evidence is that an early Christian scribe or scribal school inserted PA at John 7.53–8.11, where it was copied, re-copied, sometimes omitted, and sometimes omitted but still referenced, for centuries until liturgical readings began to influence non-liturgical texts, at which point PA was, at times, relocated to alternative locations. This liturgical act was made easier since many of the extant manuscripts of GJohn omitted PA entirely.

4. *Summary and Conclusion*

Taken together, then, the facts that John 7.53–8.11 is (1) the majority and (2) earliest known location for PA and (3) that all of the alternative locations are late and some are certainly due to liturgical influence, suggest that John 7.53 – 8.11 was intended, by its interpolator, as a proper narrative location for PA within the gospel tradition in a manner that PA's numerous alternative locations were not. It would therefore be a mistake to dismiss the important evidence concerning PA's initial insertion at this particular manuscript location by appealing to alternative locations in manuscripts from over six hundred years later. In this light, while Johnson is correct to note that PA is non-Johannine, he significantly overlooks the available evidence when he further concludes that PA is 'so mechanically placed in its present location that a literary consideration of the Gospel can legitimately work around it.'⁸⁸ To the contrary, if modern scholars attempting a 'literary consideration' of GJohn choose to 'work around' PA, they are simultaneously choosing to ignore the work of a Christian scribe who was already giving such consideration to that narrative only a couple of hundred years—if that—after its creation.⁸⁹ What did that interpolator read in the Johannine gospel that made the middle of John 7 and 8 a particularly appropriate location for PA?

⁸⁸ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (rev. ed.; London: SCM Press, 1999), 544–5.

⁸⁹ In this light, PA's insertion into GJohn is not 'mechanical' at all, but rather sophisticated and an early form of gospel commentary.

Chapter Six

The *Pericope Adulterae* at John 7.53–8.11: The Preceding Context of John 7

‘It was probably introduced into John at this point (7:53) to show that Jesus knew how to write, a thing the Jews had questioned his ability to do in 7.15.’¹

If, as Chapter Five demonstrated, PA’s interpolator intended the story of the adulteress to be read between John 7 and John 8, is there any evidence in the narratives of PA and GJohn for why that location was particularly appropriate? The next three chapters will argue that there is such evidence, and will thus show that PA’s interpolator was an astute reader of the Johannine narrative. Building upon the foundational observations of the preceding chapters, regarding grapho-literacy and scribal authority, this study will now offer a Johannine reading of PA in its traditional and earliest canonical location (John 7.53–8.11). Though the reading of PA in Chapters Six to Eight constitutes an original contribution to PA and Johannine scholarship, I should note here that Edgar J. Goodspeed touched on this possible interpretation of PA with side-comments in two books in the 1940’s. Goodspeed suggested that someone inserted PA into GJohn in order to disprove the Jews’ assumption that Jesus did not ‘know letters’ in John 7.15.² He did not develop his thoughts beyond these few sentences (one of which is quoted at the beginning of this chapter) and subsequent scholarship has ignored his suggestions for nearly seventy years.³ This thesis as a whole—and the next three chapters especially—seeks to do what Goodspeed did not and develop his initial insight more fully. One way the present study will accomplish this task is by focussing upon something Goodspeed and almost every other scholar who has assessed this passage has ignored—the thematic and linguistic connections between John 8.6, 8 and the LXX Exodus

¹ Edgar J. Goodspeed, *Problems of New Testament Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), 108.

² Edgar J. Goodspeed, *A History of Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), 70; Goodspeed, *Problems*, 108.

³ Johnson, ‘Re-examination,’ 12, and Schilling, ‘Story,’ 91, are exceptions who mention Goodspeed’s observation; neither develops it further.

discussion of the first tablets of stone that Moses carried down Mt. Sinai (particularly Exodus 32.15–16).⁴ This interpretation of John 8.6, 8, however, must wait until subsequent chapters, as the present chapter is concerned with PA's preceding context of John 7 and what PA's interpolator read there to make him think a grapho-literate Jesus should follow it.

PA's interpolator did not choose John 7.53–8.11 as a random location; he instead placed PA at this juncture in GJohn's narrative in order to highlight PA's contents by bringing it into dialogue with John 7. Though not necessarily contrary to this proposal, numerous scholars posit instead that a scribe inserted PA into John 7.53–8.11 in order to give an image of Jesus that supports his statement in 8.15 that he does not judge.⁵ If PA's original interpolator wanted to draw an explicit connection between PA and John 8.15, why did he not place the story immediately prior to (or even after) that passage?⁶ The most logical solution, and the one followed here, is that the interpolator did not *primarily* want to connect PA to John 8.15, though he most likely found Jesus' statement there to be further confirmation for the appropriateness of its narrative home at John 7.53–8.11. Unfortunately, the assumption that PA is *directly* connected with John 8.15, combined with PA's alternative locations and textual history, has led scholars to ignore almost completely the manner in which PA, and specifically PA's grapho-literate Jesus, contribute to the scene unfolding in John 7.⁷ What follows will therefore bring these issues to the fore of the discussion by focussing upon the interrelationship of authority, Moses, the

⁴ A number of scholars argue for a possible connection with Exodus 31.18, but as will be shown, this connection depends on the heretofore overlooked connection with Exodus 32.15.

⁵ *Inter alia*, Friedrich Blass, *Philology of the Gospels* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1898), 162; Bruce, *Gospel of John*, 413; Burge, 'Specific Problem,' 144; John Ferguson, 'The Woman Taken in Adultery,' *ExpT* 93 (1982): 280; Grundmann, *Evangelium*, 245; Lincoln, *Gospel According to Saint John*, 528; Schilling, 'Story,' 96–97; Gerard S. Sloyan, *John* (IBC; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 95; Strachan, *Fourth Gospel*, 204; Temple, *Readings*, 132, 150; Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament* (trans. John Moore Trout et al.; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909), 3.346.

⁶ The scribe of fifteenth-century 2691 did place PA after 8.14a. See Chapter Five, however, where I posited that, like 115's inclusion of 8.12 prior to PA, this was most likely due to the influence of lectionary reading.

⁷ Some exceptions are worthy of mention. Godet, *Commentary*, 645, suggests PA may have been inserted in connection with John 7.45 or 8.15. Zahn, *Introduction*, 3.346n.3, suggests that Papias inserted PA in connection with Jesus' sayings in John 7.24 and 8.15, and states further that PA provides a 'fine contrast' to 7.45–52. Similarly, Frederik Wisse, 'The Nature and Purpose of Redactional Changes in Early Christian Texts: The Canonical Gospels,' in *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century: Origins, Recensions, Text, and Transmission* (ed. William L. Petersen; CJA 3; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 48.

law, judgment, and literacy/education as both the crowd and the Jewish leadership attempts to answer the question ‘Who is Jesus?’ in John 7.

1. Who is Jesus?: The Johannine Characters’ Apprehension of Jesus’ Identity

John announces Jesus’ identity to the reader in the first chapter, where both the narrator and characters assign Jesus no less than eight titles.⁸ While this rhetorical punch, along with the prologue, informs the reader of Jesus’ identity, the full cast of characters in the narrative must discover it for themselves, as this process presents the conflict that drives the story. For example, the Samaritan woman struggles with Jesus’ identity throughout their conversation. She identifies him as ‘a Jew’ (4.9), ‘Lord/Sir’ (κυ, ριε; 4.11, 15, 19), someone who is surely ‘not greater than our father Jacob’ (4.12), ‘a prophet’ (4.19), and unwittingly as ‘Messiah/Christ’ (4.25). The question of Jesus’ identity is no more settled when the reader reaches the crowd (οἱ ὄχλοι),⁹ the Jewish leadership, and even Jesus’ family in PA’s preceding context of John 7.¹⁰

1.1 Who is Jesus?: The Answer of the Crowd

John 7 opens by informing the reader that the Jews are seeking to kill Jesus. Jesus’ brothers encourage him to travel into Judea for the Feast of Booths/Tabernacles in order to take his ministry public, and the narrator says they did not believe in him at this time (7.5). Jesus initially refuses, but eventually goes on his own ‘in secret’ (7.10).¹¹ Once there, the Jews are again seeking him (cf. 5.18)

⁸ ‘Word’ (1.1); ‘Lamb of God’ (1.29, 36); ‘One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit’ (1.33); ‘Son of God’ (1.34, 49); ‘Rabbi/Teacher’ (1.38, 49); ‘Messiah/Christ’ (1.41); ‘King of Israel’ (1.49); ‘Son of Man’ (1.51).

⁹ Note that the crowd as a collective group functions as a formal character in the Johannine narrative, a character often in opposition to both the Jewish leadership and Jesus.

¹⁰ Cf. Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (ed. Francis Noel Davey; 2d rev. ed.; London: Faber and Faber, 1947), 316–7, who, speaking specifically of John 7.25–30, says, ‘The question of the messiahship and of the criteria by which the Messiah can be recognized now logically emerges as the central theme of the narrative which follows.’ To qualify Hoskyns slightly, it is not technically the question of ‘messiahship,’ but rather the question of Jesus and how he fits (or does not fit) into ‘the criteria by which the Messiah can be recognized’ that is the central theme. The apprehension of Jesus’ true identity by the characters of the narrative continues to provide conflict even with Jesus’ interrogation by Pilate in John 18.33–38, where Pilate’s four questions—‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ ‘What have you done?’ ‘You are a King?’ ‘What is truth?’—are all interrelated. Pilate asks all the right questions, which have been answered repetitively by the narrative the reader experiences, yet still sends Jesus to the cross.

¹¹ A number of manuscripts, including P⁶⁶ P⁷⁵ and Codex B (Vaticanus) replace 7.8’s οὐκ with οὐπω, and thus have Jesus saying, ‘I not yet go up to this feast,’ rather than, ‘I do not go up to this feast.’ Most likely, a scribe has altered the negation in order to keep Jesus from contradicting

and the crowds are restless. ‘And there was considerable complaining about him among the crowds. While some were saying, “He is a good man,” others were saying, “No, he is deceiving the crowd”’ (7.12, NRSV). Here a divided crowd is portrayed as Jesus’ brothers are previously—not really knowing what to do with Jesus. After accusing Jesus of demonic possession (7.20), an apparently more mellowed group of Jerusalemites¹² is amazed at the rulers’ behaviour toward Jesus and states, ‘And here he is, speaking openly (*parrhysi, a|*), but they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Messiah?’ (7.26, NRSV). This mildly positive statement, however, is quickly nullified when the crowd asserts that it knows what the rulers apparently do not, and questions the previous identification of Jesus—‘Yet we know where this man is from; but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from’ (7.27, NRSV). Some members of the crowd however, do believe Jesus is the Christ based on his signs (*shmei/a*, 7.31).¹³ The crowd is also divided as to Jesus’ identity in 7.40–41a: ‘When they heard these words, some in the crowd said, “This is really the prophet.” Others said, “This is the Messiah”’ (NRSV). The narrator makes this division explicit in 7.43 and violently so in 7.44 when the reader learns that many within the crowd wanted to seize Jesus, as they also did in 7.30. The crowd, therefore, remains divided as to Jesus’ identity. Some identify him as the Prophet, some as the Christ, while others reject these attributions and seek to seize him. In this respect, the crowd displays precisely the same reaction to Jesus as the Jewish leadership.

1.2 Who is Jesus?: The Answer of the Jewish Leadership

The text alternatively identifies the Jewish leadership as ‘the rulers’ (7.26, 48), ‘the Jews,’ (7.1, 11, 15, 35), ‘the Pharisees’ (7.32, 47, 48), and ‘the chief priests and Pharisees’ (7.45) in John 7, but for convenience I will refer to them mostly as the

himself. Lincoln, *Gospel According to Saint John*, 244–5, sees Jesus’ initial refusal and subsequent concession as part of a pattern, also present in 2.3–10, 4.47–53, and 11.3–15, whereby ‘a request or suggestion is made to him and he rebuffs it, but then in a delayed response he accedes to it, yet on his own terms.’ See also C. H. Gibling, ‘Suggestion, Negative Response, and Positive Action in St John’s Portrayal of Jesus (John 2.1–11.; 4.46–54.; 7.2–14.; 11.1–44.)’, *NTS* 26 (1979–1980): 197–211; Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1.704n.16. Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 313, *inter alia*, posits a play on ‘to go up,’ whereby Jesus does ‘go up’ to Jerusalem but does not ‘go up’ (ascend) to the Father until his hour.

¹² This term occurs elsewhere in the NT only in Mark 1.5.

¹³ Thus, Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1.710, correctly states, ‘Contrary to scholarly tradition, John does not portray all the Jewish people, even all Jerusalemites, as hostile to Jesus.’

Jewish leadership.¹⁴ The majority of the group is portrayed as being concerned only about two things—seeking/killing Jesus (7.1, 15, 45) and the increased confusion over the identity of Jesus amongst the crowd (7.32, 48–49), who despite their apparent fear (7.13) could not manage to remain silent. The lone exception (in John 7) in the group of Jewish leaders is Nicodemus. The reader knows Nicodemus has already met privately with Jesus (John 3.1–21) and identified him as a teacher from God (3.2).¹⁵ In John 7.46–48, the Jewish leadership’s officers receive a verbal lashing for failing to bring Jesus to their superiors on account of their amazement at his teaching. Nicodemus interrupts this situation, and while the Jewish leadership is reinforcing their disbelief in Jesus, which stands in contrast to the affirmations of some in the crowd, Nicodemus reminds his companions of the illegality of their decision: ‘Our Law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?’ (7.51, NRSV). The other leaders respond to Nicodemus’ rhetorical question by chastising him as well in 7.52. The question, however, points to two things. First, like the believers in the crowd, Nicodemus’ statement (and treatment in John 3) is portrayed not as a definite affirmation but as a divisive opinion. The question ‘Who is Jesus?’ polarizes all groups attempting to answer it. Second, this inevitably leads to a theme of judgment, but a judgment that, as Nicodemus brings the issue to the fore, is centred specifically upon the Mosaic Law (7.51).

Therefore, in John 7, Jesus’ identity serves a key function in the development of the story. The crowd is divided amongst itself over Jesus, the Jewish leadership is divided amongst itself over Jesus, and factions within both groups are attempting to seize Jesus for his teachings while others display signs of belief. The crowd claims to know what the Jewish leadership does not (7.26–27) regarding Christs and prophets while the Jewish leadership claims to know what the crowd does not regarding the same (7.49–50). Critically important for the present investigation is the Jewish leadership’s criterion for why their opinion on Jesus’ status matters and the crowd’s does not—‘But this crowd, *which does not know the Law* is accursed’

¹⁴ The literature on the identity of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in GJohn is extensive, and it is beyond the scope of this study to engage it.

¹⁵ Though the first plural is used in 3.2 (οἱ ἄνθρωποι) and thus implies that the Jewish leadership as a whole recognizes Jesus, this is portraying Nicodemus alone as willing to face fully what the other leaders are unwilling to acknowledge—that Jesus’ *shmei/a* indicate his God-ordained status.

(7.49, emphasis added). The crowd, because it does not know (mh. ginw, skwn) the Mosaic Law, in contradistinction to the Jewish leadership, is *accursed* and thus unqualified to identify Jesus.¹⁶ As Barrett observes, ‘Not to know the Law meant, the Law being what it was for Judaism, lack of both education and religion.’¹⁷ Turning this rhetoric against its users, Nicodemus’ question refers to that very criterion in assessing his companions’ course of action (7.51). These themes of Moses, Mosaic Law, and judgment are intertwined here in PA’s preceding narrative context as well as the entirety of John’s narrative, where they serve as impediments to the apprehension of Jesus’ true identity.

2. *Moses, the Law, and Right Judgment*

Jesus’ relationship to Moses and Torah, for the two become conflated, is a tightrope act for GJohn’s narrator.¹⁸ John 1.17 portrays Jesus as clearly superior to Moses: ‘The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ’ (NRSV). Yet the problem is not the inherent value of Moses or the Mosaic Law. Rather, it is that these two pillars of Judaism too often prohibit belief in Jesus. Thus, in John 5.45–46, the Johannine Jesus enlists Moses as an ally in his critique of the Jews:

‘Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?’ (NRSV).

John 5.45–56 reiterates Jesus’ point from 5.38–39—they do not have to know the word of God even though they search for a sign. The Jews have ‘set their hope’ in Moses while failing to see the significance of Jesus, and thus never truly believed Moses. Immediately following this statement, Jesus performs the feeding of the 5000, proving that he is the bread of life (6.35), but no less so proving

¹⁶ For discussions of the crowd as ‘the people of the land’ (#r, a ‘h’ -m[;) here, see C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 78; Severino Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel: The Torah and the Gospel, Moses and Jesus, Judaism and Christianity, According to John* (NovTSup 42; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 103–5.

¹⁷ Barrett, *Gospel According to St. John*, 332.

¹⁸ To borrow a phrase from Watson, *Paul*, 281, ‘Here, the person and the text are one and the same.’ See also Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 144–5. Watson and Hays refer to 2 Corinthians 3, but it is equally applicable in a Johannine context. See, for example, T. Francis Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel* (SBT 40; London: SCM, 1963), 26, 86.

that the inability of the Jews to recognize Jesus as superior to Moses extends as well to the crowd. Jesus' provision of bread is grander than Moses' feeding miracle and demonstrates his superiority, since it aligns him with God as provider rather than Moses as recipient.¹⁹ However, the crowd (who after this miraculous display asks for a sign in 6.30!) and the Jews (7.41) prove their common Israelite ancestry by failing to learn the lesson of the manna anew. The stumbling blocks that are Moses and the Mosaic Law even lead Jesus to refer to the latter as 'your law' when explaining that the Hebrew Scriptures confirm his identity and thus his status as non-judge-yet-true-judge (8.15–17).

In GJohn, the theme of judgment, and the issue of who can truly judge, is bound tightly with the question of who truly 'has' Moses.²⁰ John 3.18 describes Jesus as the criterion for God's judgment rather than as active judge himself: 'Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God' (NRSV). Therefore, active judgment comes from God not *through* Jesus, but *based on one's response* to Jesus.²¹ This ambiguity allows the Johannine Jesus to state that he in fact does judge (5.22, 27, 30; 8.16, 26) and that he does not judge (3.17; 8.15; 12.47). Jesus judges based on his unity with the Father, but the Father's judgment is based on response to Jesus as God's Son. In this way, GJohn contains what Neyrey helpfully labels as two 'stream[s] of judgmental material'—in one stream Jesus is judge; in another Jesus is judged.²² That is, in the narrative world of GJohn, the characters' judgment *of* Jesus determines their judgment *by* Jesus (and the Father). Thus, when the Mosaic Law and the status of Moses in Second Temple Judaism prohibit belief in Jesus, as is the case with predominant factions within both the Jewish leadership and the crowd, they become instruments of judgment.

¹⁹ On this interpretation of John 6, see further Chapter Eight.

²⁰ In an otherwise helpful article, Jerome H. Neyrey, 'The Trials (Forensic) and Tribulations (Honor Challenges) of Jesus: John 7 in Social Science Perspective,' *BTB* 26 (1996): 107–24, fails to acknowledge the crucial role that Moses and the Mosaic Law play in both the 'judgment' and 'challenge and riposte' themes of John 7.

²¹ Likewise, William Loader, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Structure and Issues* (2d ed.; BET 23; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992), 104–5.

²² Neyrey, 'Trials and Tribulations,' 110. Also, Andrew T. Lincoln, *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000), 33–35.

PA's preceding context portrays similarly these two groups—the Jewish leadership and the crowd—who are otherwise opponents.²³ Jesus answers a question of the Jewish leaders in John 7.16–19 and completes his statement by saying, 'Did not Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why are you looking for an opportunity to kill me?' (7.19, NRSV). Yet it is the *the crowd* who responds to this accusation, 'You have a demon! Who is trying to kill you?' (7.20, NRSV).²⁴ Jesus' pairing together of failure to keep the Mosaic Law and hostility towards him implies that one truly 'has' Moses only when one responds favourably to Jesus. As previously mentioned, both groups of Jesus' opponents, while bickering about each other, ironically claim to have privileged knowledge of the Messiah (the crowd, 7.26–28, cf. 7.42; the Jewish leadership, 7.48–49) to the exclusion of the other group, and thus know at least who Jesus is not. As we will see, this position of both groups is something that the narrator seeks to undermine. Nicodemus' question in 7.51 again brings these two themes of Moses/law and proper judgment together, and it is in this narrative context that the scribes and Pharisees ask Jesus to interpret *Moses* in terms of the *judgment* of an adulteress, that is, someone who has committed a Decalogue sin.²⁵

Prior to further discussion on PA itself, however, one must note a third issue that is intertwined with these first two. In John 7.49, the Jewish leadership distinguishes between their assessment of Jesus and the assessment of the crowd. As mentioned previously, the criterion dividing these two groups, according to the Jewish leadership, is that the crowd does not 'know the law.' I suggest that this does

²³ Contrary to Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 315, there is no evidence in John 7 that the distinction between the Jewish leadership and the crowd 'is not maintained,' much less that 'the phrase *the Jews* seems often to be simply equivalent to *the crowd*' (emphasis original). As the present discussion shows, in John 7 each group identifies itself over and against the other, and thus the distinction is maintained. Likewise, Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 87, 295; Francis J. Moloney, *Signs and Shadows: Reading John 5–12* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 78.

²⁴ Lincoln, *Gospel According to Saint John*, 247, regards instances such as this, where the audience of Jesus' teaching shifts, as an unsightly seam that the redactor has left exposed in his weaving of sources. A more likely explanation is that this portrayal of the two groups is a narrative dynamic whereby the evangelist attempts to highlight the chaotic inability of *anyone* to identify Jesus properly. Even when one group asks a question, Jesus' answer can divide the other group that is also presumably present (as in John 7.19–20). Note that, in PA, Jesus' primary audience is the people, but quickly becomes the scribes and Pharisees when they interrupt (John 8.2–3).

²⁵ This point is made independently of but in agreement with John Paul Heil, 'A Rejoinder to "Reconsidering 'The Story of Jesus and the Adulteress Reconsidered'" (John 7:53–8:11),' *EgT* 25 (1994): 364.

not primarily mean familiarity with the law (for the crowd is portrayed as familiar with the Scriptures in 7.42), but in the contextual power structures of the narrative refers to levels of *access* to the law and thus who can speak officially regarding it. One key barrier to the crowd and not the trained Jewish leadership was the written texts of the law. Regardless of whether formal rabbinic schools existed in the first century, Jewish leaders like those reflected in John 7 would undoubtedly have received further training in the Torah that was not available to the crowd. As Chapter Three demonstrated, this would have at least included advanced training in reading the Hebrew text and, for those who proceeded to even further training, the ability to write and thus copy the Hebrew text.

This does not imply that, for example, *every* non-Pharisee was incapable of reading and perhaps even writing Torah-level Hebrew; nor does it imply that *every* Pharisee, Sadducee, or chief priest was able to read or even write (indeed, *m. Yoma* 1.3 and 1.6 suggest the possibility of a high priest who is incapable of reading). It does, however, mean that, as a whole, and specifically regarding the only text that truly mattered in such issues as the identity of the Messiah, the constituency of the Jewish leadership was significantly more literate than the constituency of the crowd. That is, the Jewish leadership was able to *access* (read, copy, study, interpret, transmit) the Scriptures in a manner that the crowd was not, and everyone knew this. Therefore, as Chapter Four demonstrated, a certain level of communal authority and prestige associated with Jewish leaders derived directly from their level of access to the text that was a result of their training. Those specialists within the ranks of the Jewish leadership became text-brokers for the illiterate or non-specialized, a status that by extension applied to the group as a whole. Precisely this status of the Jewish leadership is reflected in their dismissal of the crowd's identification of Jesus in John 7.49—the crowd cannot even be said to *know* the law, much less the identity of Jesus/the prophet/the Christ based upon it. This status of the Jewish leadership is equally reflected in their surprise at Jesus' teaching at John 7.15: 'The Jews then were astonished at it, saying, "How does this man have such learning, when he has never been taught?"' (John 7.15, NRSV). Jesus' teaching evinces signs of proper access to Torah, that which comes with training, a training that is not associated with Galileans!²⁶

²⁶ Neyrey, 'Trials and Tribulations,' 119–20, notes how Jesus' known origins and known lack of proper education provide basis for challenges to his honour in John 7.

3. Education and the Problem of a Galilean Origin

In addition to Jesus' identity, the text announces his origin to the reader at the start of GJohn—'the Word was God' (1.1); 'This one was in the beginning with God' (1.2); 'And the Word became flesh and lived among us' (1.14). The characters of John's narrative, however, are not privileged to this insider information and thus struggle throughout the text with Jesus' Galilean origin and its implications for his identity as teacher/prophet/Christ.²⁷

The problem of Jesus' Galilean origin is evident throughout GJohn, beginning in the opening chapter when Jesus' eventual followers first raise the issue of his Galilean origin. When Philip identifies Jesus as 'the one Moses wrote about in the law and the prophets' (1.45), Nathanael responds by abruptly asking, 'Is it possible for anything good to be from Nazareth?' (1.46). Jesus must perform a demonstration of omniscience before Nathanael will call him 'Rabbi,' 'Son of God,' and 'King of Israel' (1.49).

Likewise, when Jesus returns to Galilee, this time in Capernaum, he suffers grave misunderstanding from both the crowd and the Jews. Following the feeding of the 5000, and the crowd's inability to see Jesus as superior to Moses (6.30–31) and request for Jesus to feed them always (6.34), Jesus says, 'I am the bread of life, the one who comes to me will never hunger . . . because I have descended from heaven, not in order to do my will, but the will of the one who sent me' (6.35, 38). In response to this claim, the Jews who are in the audience ask in 6.42, 'Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, of whom we know (his) father and mother? How, now, does he say, "I have descended from heaven"?' The narrative portrays the 'grumbling' of the Jews here as a direct contrast to the ready response of the Samaritans and the official in Capernaum. Important for present purposes, however, is that the specific issue with the Jews is that they know Jesus' earthly origin and

²⁷ Some scholars argue that readers of GJohn are expected to know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem rather than Galilee, and thus that the characters' assumption that Jesus is from Galilee is part of Johannine irony. See, e.g., Craig L. Blomberg, 'The Historical Reliability of John: Rushing in Where Angels Fear to Tread?', in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, 81; R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (NTFF; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 170; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 242. Though the narrator undoubtedly saturates discussions of Jesus' origin with irony, it is difficult to know whether he employs irony because he expects the audience to know that Jesus' true origin is 'from the Father,' 'from Bethlehem,' or both. For present purposes, the emphasis is on the implications of Jesus' assumed (whether correctly or not) Galilean origin for his status as a teacher/prophet/Christ.

thus cannot fathom his heavenly origin. Since they ‘know’ Jesus, they fail to ‘know’ him, even though his actions (6.11) demonstrate the truth of his claim to be the bread of life (6.35).²⁸ Jesus says in 6.45 that those who are ‘taught by God’ are those who come to him, yet his statements only lead to quarrel in the camp of ‘the Jews’ (7.52), who are thus not those ‘taught by God.’²⁹ At John 7.15 the issue of Jesus’ origin is cast even more explicitly in terms of teaching and education.

3.1 ‘How does this man know letters?’ (John 7.15)

In John 7.15, Jesus has left Galilee and now returned secretly to Jerusalem for the Feast of Booths/Tabernacles. Once there, Jesus goes to the Temple and begins teaching. This time his teaching elicits a different response from the Jews, who have to this point only argued about and sought to kill Jesus. ‘The Jews then were astonished, saying, “How is this man learned, having never been educated?”’ (7.15) The Jews are amazed at Jesus’ abilities as a teacher, and specifically amazed because they know he has not been educated.³⁰ The phrase translated ‘learned’ above and as ‘have such learning’ in NRSV is *grā,mmata oi=den*, literally ‘knows letters,’ and the meaning of this phrase is crucial for the present discussion.

3.1.1 *grā,mmata eivde,nai* (John 7.15)

At the beginning of his landmark study on literacy in antiquity, Harris offers a helpful caveat with regard to *grā,mmata eivde,nai*. Given that the ancient sources employ the phrase with multiple meanings in multiple contexts, Harris says,

Even when it is clear that an ancient literary text is referring to basic literacy and not to some higher level of education, it is very seldom clear how much knowledge a person needed to qualify as “knowing letters.” Such expressions have to be interpreted case by case.³¹

In this light, then, and however GJohn might have been employed in Jewish, Gentile, or mixed churches, it is clear that John 7.15 does not refer to a general education, but

²⁸ Cf. Neyrey, ‘Trials and Tribulations,’ 113.

²⁹ In anticipation of Chapter Seven, note that all the people (*pa/j o` lao, j*) come to Jesus and he *teaches* them in PA at John 8.2, directly contrasting the Jews at the end of John 7.

³⁰ Pace Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1.712, John 7.15 narrates neither ‘the crowd’s amazement’ nor that ‘people were amazed’ at Jesus’ teaching ability; rather it specifies that it was ‘the Jews’ (*oi` vIoudai/oi*) who were astonished.

³¹ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 6.

rather a quite specific *Jewish* education, and the *grammata* that the Jews assume Jesus surprisingly knows are the letters of the Jewish law. Thus Hoskyns:

If these words stood by themselves, they would mean simply that Jesus was illiterate, unable to read or write, since the Greek adjective *without letters* meant precisely this. . . . But in its context, and especially in reference to v. 46, *letters* means the writings of Moses.³²

Likewise, as Pancaro notes (and Chapter Three demonstrated), while the phrase ‘means “writings” in a general sense, learning in Israel (even the first lessons of reading) had the Scriptures as its foundation.’³³ Heeding Harris’ warning, then, one must first recognize that *grammata eivdenai*, in the context of John 7, means ‘to know Moses’ or ‘to have a certain level of familiarity with the Mosaic law.’ What did it mean, therefore, for the Jews of John 7.15 to be surprised that Jesus ‘knew Moses/the law’?

Evans claims that John 7.15 ‘is taken by some to prove Jesus was in fact illiterate.’³⁴ He fails to cite supporting evidence for this statement, however, as Foster notes in his helpful survey of commentary discussions of this passage. Foster demonstrates that, in fact, ‘the majority of scholars throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries’ have read John 7.15 as evidence that Jesus’ contemporaries surprisingly indeed thought he *was* literate.³⁵ Evans himself advocates this position and proceeds to argue that the Historical Jesus was literate enough to read the Hebrew Scriptures, but may not have received scribal training.³⁶ Alternatively, Bauer sees John 7.15 as a Christian response to anti-Christian polemic

³² Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 314 (emphasis original). Likewise, Barrett, *Gospel According to St. John*, 317; Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 273n.3; Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 311; Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1.712; Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 75.

³³ Pancaro, *Law in the Fourth Gospel*, 88. On 170–74, Pancaro provides an instructive argument against the realignment of John 7.15–24 to follow John 5, initially proposed by Bultmann. Amongst other points, he correctly notes that 7.15 makes perfect sense following 7.14: ‘It is not so much Jesus’ use of the Scriptures as his “going up to the Temple to teach”, his placing himself on an equal footing with the Rabbis of his day, which is at stake. Any man could refer to the Scriptures [as 7.42 demonstrates], not just anyone could make his way into the Temple and start teaching’ (170). More recently, Snyder, *Teachers*, 189: ‘[Jesus] may well have interpreted the Law differently at points, but it was the fact that he set himself up as an interpreter *at all* that was the basic affront’ (emphasis original).

³⁴ Evans, ‘Context,’ 16.

³⁵ Foster, ‘Educating Jesus,’ 18.

³⁶ Evans, ‘Context,’ 16, 21. Keener, *IVP Bible*, 282, is perhaps shadow-boxing with the same charges against an illiterate Jesus as Evans: ‘The issue here is not that Jesus is illiterate (he is not), but that he has never formally studied Scripture with an advanced teacher.’

concerning the fact that ‘Jesus wäre ein Analphabet gewesen.’³⁷ Foster seems hesitant of this conclusion:

The remark in John 7.15 cannot be construed as direct evidence for Jesus being illiterate, unless one adopts Bauer’s thesis that it is written to correct a polemic directed at a historically unlettered Jesus. However, this passage as it stands points in precisely the opposite direction, namely that Jesus “knows letters” contrary to what expectations might have suggested.³⁸

Foster thus claims the natural reading of the text implies that Jesus was in fact literate, yet, for Foster this yields little information regarding the Historical Jesus’ literacy. He concludes, ‘Yet the context militates against taking this knowledge of letters as denoting the ability to read, for here it appears to refer to the skills of oral teaching and rhetoric.’³⁹ Thus, according to Bauer, John 7.15 may point to the fact that the Historical Jesus was illiterate, and early Christians used passages such as this to combat pagan criticism of their unlearned founding figure. According to Foster, John 7.15 may instead reflect a learned Historical Jesus, but nonetheless it primarily points to Jesus’ teaching prowess and sheds little light on Jesus’ ability to read and/or write. Evans argues that John 7.15 points to a literate Jesus, and that this is a faithful portrait of the Historical Jesus. Scholars thus disagree as to whether the Jewish surprise at Jesus’ knowledge of letters actually means he knew letters, and what this might mean for the Historical Jesus.

3.1.2 The Implication of ‘Knowing Letters’

Leaving Historical Jesus issues aside and focussing solely on the claim of the narrative, it is important that John 7.15 is not a direct statement of the Johannine narrator, but a statement that the narrator places upon the lips of Jesus’ adversaries. The Johannine narrator therefore never claims that Jesus ‘knew letters,’ only that, whether Jesus knew letters or not, he certainly taught as if he did, and this creates problems for his adversaries. This example highlights confusion that emerges when scholars view knowledge of letters/the law as possession of separate and easily

³⁷ D. Walter Bauer, *Das Johannesevangelium* (2d ed.; HNT 6; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1925), 105. Likewise, Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 12–13, views John 7.15 (and Acts 4.13) as a dogmatic response of the early Church, and claims, ‘Critical research can hardly build too much on these sayings’ (13).

³⁸ Foster, ‘Educating Jesus,’ 19.

³⁹ Foster, ‘Educating Jesus,’ 19.

identifiable skills rather than, as it is in this context, a socially-acknowledged package of skills. Thus, while Foster is correct to note that the context of John 7.15 depicts neither reading nor writing, he is unwarranted to conclude that the portrayal of ‘the skills of oral teaching and rhetoric’ precludes an assumption of Jesus’ ability to read and/or write. The negated participle, providing the condition for the Jews’ surprise that Jesus *grammata oiden*, deters such an interpretation—the Jews were surprised at Jesus’ knowledge of letters specifically because he had not been taught (*mh. memaqhkw, j*). That is, the Jews associate Jesus’ teaching with knowledge of letters. As Chapter Three demonstrated, Jewish education, whether formal or informal, focused primarily upon reading Torah with writing being reserved for the further stages.⁴⁰ For most Jews, however, such education would not have been available beyond the very initial stages, if even those. The members of the Jewish authority are representative of the minority who were able to continue in their studies of Torah. Though their respective levels of access to the Mosaic writings would have differed amongst each other, they collectively would have had higher literacy skills than an itinerant preacher from Galilee. Their astonishment, therefore, is best understood as surprise that Jesus’ teaching implies a certain knowledge of, and access to, Torah that is indicative of having been submitted to the educational process that familiarized one with the holy text. They are quite certain Jesus was not privileged enough to have this educational opportunity, and thus the Jesus of John 7 is a paradox.⁴¹ The Jewish leadership of John 7 displays an ‘us/them’ mentality in regards to the crowd, with the dividing line being knowledge of the law (7.48–49, 52).⁴² The henchmen of 7.32 are rebuked in 7.45–49 for acknowledging that Jesus appears to be on the leadership’s side of this divide.

⁴⁰ Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1.712, suggests that the Jewish leadership is complaining not of Jesus’ lack of elementary education, but rather his lack of ‘adult training under a more formal teacher in a school for the study of the Law.’ It is hard to view either possibility as more likely than the other, however, and this is mostly due to the learning of ‘letters’ in Jewish education. As Chapter Three demonstrated, learning to *read* letters occurred in primary education for Jews, while learning to *write* letters likely occurred in the later stages that Keener prefers to see in view. PA provides the explicit claim that Jesus’ education extends into the upper stages of Torah pedagogy.

⁴¹ As Neyrey, ‘Trials and Tribulations,’ 120, observes: ‘It seems to be a public fact, at least in the Johannine narrative world, that Jesus did not have a formal *paideia* and did not sit at the feet of any teacher, as Paul did (Acts 22:3).’ Similarly, Temple, *Readings*, 119.

⁴² Concerning knowledge of the law as a dividing line in Jewish society in John 7.15, 49, Beasley-Murray, *John*, 108, and others reference *b. Sotah* 22a. This rabbinic text gives various definitions for an *am ha aretz*, all of which are stated negatively (‘It is someone who does not . . .’). Clear from this text is that an *am ha aretz* was anyone who did not have the time to study Torah and rabbis professionally. Whether these teachings reach back to first-century Palestine, one can assume

Jesus' 'skills of oral teaching and rhetoric' in John 7 are therefore the earmarks of education in the holy scriptures, an education that, for the Jewish leadership, included advanced reading and thus advanced access to the text.⁴³ Carson and Köstenberger are thus not only incorrect to assume that reading and writing ability were common for Jewish males, but also incorrect to assume that there was an easily identifiable difference between this ability and the 'ability to carry on a sustained discourse in the manner of the rabbis, including frequent references to Scriptures.'⁴⁴ To the contrary, for the Jewish leadership of Jesus' day, literacy skills went 'hand in hand' with informed discussion of the law. Thus, Jesus' level of teaching itself provided sufficient grounds for the henchmen to assume he 'knew letters' without him having to pull out a scroll and read it in front of them.⁴⁵ Bultmann is correct in his interpretation of the Jewish leadership's surprise: 'How can Jesus appeal to the Scriptures! He has not made a proper study of them! He does not belong to the guild of Scribes.'⁴⁶ As Neyrey observes, 'This *charge* reasons that Jesus cannot know the Law and so teach correctly, for he has no formal education. . . . In effect, he is to them [the Jewish leadership] a self-made impostor, who vainly claims special status.'⁴⁷ Both Second Temple Jews and the original audience of GJohn would have understood that the implication of Jesus' knowledge of the law in John 7.15 is that he in fact could read the text(s). In this sense, Bauer's thesis regarding John 7.15 being an early Christian response to anti-Christian polemic accusing Jesus of illiteracy maintains some validity. John 7.15 demonstrates that it was common knowledge that Jesus was not formally educated in the Jewish scriptures, but nonetheless displayed the teaching authority of those who were. Mark 1.22 and Matthew 7.28–29 further suggest that Jesus' powerful teaching was demarcated from those who had climbed the traditional rungs of Torah education. Most important to the present discussion is

that the demographics they reflect certainly did and that this is indeed what appears in texts such as John 7.15, 49.

⁴³ Quotation from Foster, 'Educating Jesus,' 19.

⁴⁴ Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 311; Köstenberger, *John*, 232. Quotation from Köstenberger. Evans, 'Context,' 22, is also sympathetic to the idea of widespread literacy.

⁴⁵ Pace Thomas J. Kraus, 'John 7:15B: "Knowing Letters" and (Il)literacy,' in his *Ad Fontes*, 175, Jesus never 'reads fluently,' or at all, in John 7.15 or its context.

⁴⁶ Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 273. Similarly J. Becker, *Evangelium*, 258. It should be noted, however, that at this point in the narrative the scribes have not made an appearance, and nor will they unless one reads PA as part of GJohn.

⁴⁷ Neyrey, 'Trials and Tribulations,' 111 (emphasis original).

that the fact that Jesus *grammata oi=den* implied not literate skills directly, but a high level of access to the text that was dependent upon those literate skills, and thus a higher level of authority. Even more importantly, in the mind of the Jewish leadership, this higher level of access to the text separates them from the crowd.

As mentioned previously, at each stage in John 7, interpretive authority is related to the ability to judge. John 7.16–19 parallels Jesus’ status as teacher with his status as judge. Here Jesus responds to the astonishment of the Jewish leadership by claiming that both positions point to his relationship with the Father:

My teaching is not mine but his who sent me. Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own. Those who speak on their own seek their own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and there is nothing false in him. Did not Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why are you looking for an opportunity to kill me? (John 7.16b–19, NRSV)

Jesus follows this statement with another that again demonstrates his superiority to Moses to the crowd that, along with the Jews, simply cannot learn this lesson—if they are adamant that circumcision be performed on the Sabbath in order to obey the Law of Moses, why are they upset that Jesus heals an ‘entire man’ on the Sabbath (7.23)? The following verse demonstrates the interlocked nature of the questions concerning Jesus’ identity, the law, and right judgment: ‘Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right (*dikai, an*) judgment’ (7.24, NRSV). The only one qualified to know who Jesus is, and thus qualified to judge him or anyone else, is the one who is righteous, the one who recognizes Jesus’ superiority to Moses and Moses’ Law. These questions again arise together in 7.52 and PA; first, however, the question of Jesus’ origin again assumes importance in 7.41.

3.2 *‘Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee’ (John 7.41)*

The scene in John 7.41 is the division of the crowd over Jesus’ identity. Some claim Jesus is the Prophet (7.40), while others claim he is the Messiah (7.41a). In response to this latter claim, one group within the crowd asks rhetorically in 7.41b–42 (NRSV), ‘Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, doe he? Has not the scripture said that the Messsiah is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?’ Though this verse does not deal with Jesus’ education, his Galilean origin is again problematic for his identification as Messiah. The crowd demonstrates a knowledge of the Scriptures (to which 7.26–27

may also allude) and asserts that the Messiah is supposed to come from David's hometown. It must be noted here that the narrator could present the crowd's query without mentioning Galilee, for he does so in 7.26–27 where the crowd simply states that Jesus must not be the Christ since they know from where Jesus comes. The narrator, however, does include a reference to Galilee as a second-level problem for the claim that Jesus is the Messiah. For the crowd, not only is Jesus *not* from Bethlehem, but even further he *is* from Nazareth.

3.3 '*No prophet arises out of Galilee*' (John 7.52)

In 7.52, the Jewish leadership's response is the same as the response of the non-believing faction within the crowd in 7.41b–42. In this regard, the Johannine narrator consistently presents the crowd and the Jewish leadership in similar terms. Both are divided because of Jesus and sceptics within both claim he cannot be the true Christ because he is from Galilee. Both know the Scriptures (the crowd 7.42; Jewish leadership 7.49, 52) and both know Jesus' Galilean origin (the crowd 7.41; Jewish leadership 7.52), yet their knowledge of the law and of Jesus' earthly background prohibit them from truly knowing either the law or Jesus (5.46–47). The Jewish leadership's response to Nicodemus' accusation that their judgment of Jesus is not according to the law confirms that the crowd's statement in 7.41 is indeed a slander and not merely a disqualification. "They replied, "Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee"" (7.52, NRSV).⁴⁸ As Pancaro notes, "The Law . . . and belief on Jesus . . . are, for the Pharisees, mutually exclusive."⁴⁹ Nicodemus' apparent need to 'search (the Scriptures)' explains the implication of Nicodemus being from Galilee. From the perspective of the Jewish leadership, anyone who knows the Scriptures will know that a prophet does not come from Galilee; and if someone does think Jesus may be a prophet then he must be from Galilee himself and ignorant of the Scriptures like the crowd (which is why the Jesus of 7.15 is such a paradox).⁵⁰ Here, again, then, Jesus' Galilean origin presents problems for those answering the question 'Who is Jesus?'

⁴⁸ A textual variant exists at 7.52, with P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵ reading οὐ προφη, τηj and most others προφη, τηj. He claims that Jesus' identification with the light of the world is in reference to Isaiah 9.1–2, which promises that that light will come via Galilee.

⁴⁹ Pancaro, *Law in the Fourth Gospel*, 104.

⁵⁰ Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 325: 'They therefore rudely and scornfully silence Nicodemus by stating that only a Galilean, ignorant of the Scriptures, could suppose that even a prophet could emerge from Galilee.'

4. Summary of John 7

Given the various elements intricately at work in John 7, it is necessary to pause briefly and summarize the previous observations before proceeding to consider PA itself.

First, the primary issue of John 7 is Jesus' identity. The crowd and the Jewish leadership are divided between each other in this regard, each claiming to know who Jesus is, or at least is not, over against the other. Critical to note here is that the Jewish leadership consider their opinion of Jesus to be the significant one based on their familiarity with the law, a familiarity which is not assumed for the crowd (John 7.47–49). The polarization over Jesus' identity occurs, however, not only between these groups but internally as well. Factions within the crowd respond both positively and negatively to Jesus, as do factions within the Jewish leadership. And again, for the more text-centred Jewish leadership, the law is the dividing line. Nicodemus claims that the Jewish leadership's premature judgment of Jesus violates the law itself, while the Jewish leadership claims that if Nicodemus knew the Scriptures, he would know that a prophet does not come from Galilee.

Second, Nicodemus' accusation and his colleagues' response reveal the Jewish leadership's symbiotic dependence upon knowledge of the law for their status as authoritative interpreters. They base Jesus' identity not upon what he does or says, but rather upon what they know of Moses and the Mosaic Law. That is, proper judgment in their mind—meaning a decision regarding Jesus' status as a prophet or Christ—is ultimately grounded in Moses. And when it comes to Moses and the law, the crowd may be deceived, but none of the authorities (tw/n avrco, ntwn) or the Pharisees are (John 7.47–48). PA's insertion capitalizes on the manner in which the narrator seeks to undermine this already in John 7, where Jesus makes clear that the leadership's 'knowledge' of the law/Moses is insufficient (John 7.19–24).

Third, for both the crowd and the Jewish leadership, Jesus' Galilean origin is an obstacle to his identification as prophet or Christ, as both draw attention to the Hebrew scriptures in this regard (John 7.40–42; 7.52, respectively). This is especially problematic for the Jewish leadership since some within their ranks are astonished at Jesus' apparently learned teaching (7.15, 46) while their superiors outright reject it (7.47). The Jewish leadership cannot accept Jesus' teaching for the same reason that they cannot accept Jesus' standard of right judgment in 7.24—because that standard is Jesus himself rather than the Hebrew Scriptures. For the

Jewish leadership, they alone read Moses correctly; for Jesus, one can read Moses correctly only via him. This nexus of issues continues to dominate the narrative in John 8 and further.

A scribe inserted PA into GJohn's text immediately after the Jewish leadership's statement to Nicodemus that a Jesus from Galilee is unqualified to be a prophet, and that they know this based upon their ability to search the Scriptures. By placing PA at John 7.53–8.11, the interpolator counters that Jesus not only evinces the highest form of training in the Hebrew Scriptures, but that his level of access to Torah proves his superiority to Moses, thereby confirming his status as the only person in the gospel qualified to judge righteously. To these issues the present study now turns.

Chapter Seven

The *Pericope Adulterae* at John 7.53–8.11: The Narrative

‘This section about the Adulteress was probably the most read single section in the whole history of the Church.’¹

The present chapter will demonstrate the manner in which PA as a whole contributes to the Johannine narrative in its traditional location. This reading of PA will thus build upon the previous discussion of John 7 while also providing groundwork for Chapter Eight’s specific focus on the contribution of John 8.6, 8. To that end, and although what follows will make exegetical, the purpose presently is not to provide a thorough exegesis but rather to show how PA’s narrative reveals both its non-Johannine origin and that its interpolator was a careful reader of GJohn.

1. The Narrative of John 7.53–8.11

The following analysis will present PA in sections of text. The divisions are merely for convenience, however, and do not imply an inherent structure to the narrative. I present the text of NA²⁷ (8th ed., 2001), but will discuss some of the more significant of PA’s many variants. This is necessary because PA is unlike any other section of NT text in terms of its variants.² In this regard, the work of two previous scholars deserves note, as I will draw upon their discussions of PA and its textual history: Constantin von Tischendorf and Hermann von Soden.

In Tischendorf’s *Editio octava critica maior*, he places the Codex D (Bezae) text of PA alongside the Textus Receptus.³ This had at least two interrelated effects. First, the layout of the printing highlights the significant differences between the two

¹ C. R. Gregory, *Canon and Text of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1907), 514.

² Gregory, *Canon*, 514: ‘If I am not mistaken, there are in the New Testament no other dozen verses that exhibit such a manifold variation of readings. It is a section that in reference to its textual history and textual character stands totally alone.’

³ Constantinus Tischendorf, *Novum Testamentum Graece: Editio octava critica maior* (3 vols.; Lipsiae: Giesecke & Devrient, 1869–1894), 1.830–35.

texts, and gives the appearance that there are actually two forms of PA.⁴ Thus, and second, with PA Tischendorf demonstrated that the ancient manuscript tradition differed to a substantial degree from the dominant Textus Receptus. Tischendorf's presentation of D's text is helpful for the present discussion because it highlights D's PA, which provides some of the more interesting variants in this passage.

Von Soden provides a detailed treatment of PA in his *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*.⁵ Like Tischendorf, he sees in PA a prime example of the difference between the Byzantine text form and ancient manuscripts, with the sharpest contrast being the text of D.⁶ He gives the siglum m or m^0 (for *moicali*, *j*) to the original version of PA and claimed, 'Diese Perikope ist für die Textkritik der Evv von hohem Wert.'⁷ According to his reconstruction of PA's textual history, the story went through seven recensions, m^1 – m^7 , with m^1 being the earliest recoverable version and associated particularly with D. The major methodological weakness is that von Soden bases the discussion of the textual witnesses on his hypothetical reconstructions of the recensions, which in turn serves his larger theory that the NT manuscript tradition consists of three main rescensions (which he labelled Koine [*K*], Hesychius [*H*], and Jerusalem [*I*]) from an original text that was still available to Origen. Neither von Soden's reconstruction of PA's text-history nor his larger reconstruction of NT text-history has found favour.⁸ Furthermore, his overly complex critical apparatus contributed to the work ultimately being considered 'distinctly a failure.'⁹ Nonetheless, as with *Die Schriften* as a whole, von Soden's treatment of PA is invaluable for its gathering of manuscript evidence. To the text of PA we now turn.

⁴ Parker, *Living Text*, 97. On p.97–98, Parker follows Tischendorf's practice but provides English translations.

⁵ von Soden, *Schriften*, 1.1.486–524. His text of PA appears at 1.1.500 and 2.427–8.

⁶ von Soden, *Schriften*, 1.1.490.

⁷ von Soden, *Schriften*, 1.1.486.

⁸ On von Soden's treatment of PA specifically, see Hans Lietzmann, 'H. von Sodens Ausgabe des NT: Die Perikope von der Ehebrecherin,' *ZNW* 8 (1907): 34–47; on *Die Schriften* as a whole, see Aland and Aland, *Text*, 22–23.

⁹ See Aland and Aland, *Text*, 22–23.

7.53–8.1¹ kai. evporeu,qhsan e[kastoj eivj to.n oi=kon auvtou/(
 VIhsou/j de. evporeu,qh eivj to. o;roj tw/n evlaiw/n.

The transitional statement at the opening of PA appears to be the closing of another pericope. Though many scholars view PA as a ‘floating’ (oral) tradition,¹⁰ several others suggest that this sentence demonstrates a prior textual location of PA.¹¹ It is not so certain, however, that this phrase provides evidence for a previous textual source of PA. An attentive interpolator could have provided the reference to ‘them’ going to their houses in order to smooth the transition into PA from John 7.52, and the present argument is that PA’s interpolator was indeed attentive.¹² L (ninth century CE) includes PA with an asterisk, but only begins at 8.3, thus omitting this transitional statement as well as the following verse. Several medieval lectionaries (l 184 l 211 l 387 l 514 l 751 l 773 l 890 l 1780) also begin PA at 8.3. L’s text has likely here been influenced by the lectionary practice of beginning the reading at 8.3.¹³

What does suggest another source in this sentence, however, is the reference to the Mount of Olives (;Oroj tw/n vElaiw/n). This phrase occurs here alone in GJohn, the first of several non-Johannine expressions in PA.¹⁴ The scene itself more closely parallels the Synoptic portrayal of Jesus teaching in the Temple on a daily basis prior to his passion. The appropriate narrative backdrop for PA,

¹⁰ *Inter alia*, Brown, *Gospel According to John I–XII*, 332; Burge, ‘Specific Problem,’ 144, 145; E. J. Jenkinson, *The Unwritten Sayings of Jesus* (London: Epworth Press, 1925), 31; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 220; Minear, ‘Writing,’ 23; Parker, *Living Text*, 101; Ross, ‘Floating Words’; Vincent Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (2d ed.; London: Macmillan and Co., 1953), 84.

¹¹ U. Becker, *Jesus*, 176; Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 308; Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 884; Rius-Camps, ‘Pericope,’ 380; Hans Freiherr von Campenhausen, ‘Zur Perikope von der Ehebrecherin (Joh 7₅₃–8₁₁),’ *ZNW* 68 (1977): 164, 164n.4.

¹² Though some scholars see the beginning of PA as a hard break with the previous context, this sentence itself is not enough to support that conclusion. The third person plural verb fits naturally with the group of Pharisees from 7.45–52 as its antecedent.

¹³ See also von Soden, *Schriften*, 1.1.486–7.

¹⁴ PA contains fifteen words that occur nowhere else in GJohn: evlai, a (7.53); o;rqroj (8.2); grammateu, j (8.3); moicei, a (8.3); auvto, fwnoj (8.4, also NT *hapax legomenon*); moiceu, w (8.4); ku, ptw (8.6); katagra, fw (8.6, also NT *hapax legomenon*); evpime, nw (8.7); avnaku, ptw (8.7, 10); avnama, rthtoj (8.7, also NT *hapax legomenon*); kataku, ptw (8.8, also NT *hapax legomenon*); presbu, teroj (8.9) katalei, pw (8.9); and katakri, nw (8.10).

then, is the rising tension between Jesus and the Jewish leadership that will eventually lead to his crucifixion (cf. John 7.1, 11, 25, 32).

^{8.2}:Orqrou de. pa,lin parege,neto eivj to. i`ero.n kai.
pa/j o` lao.j h;rceto pro.j auvto,n(kai. kaqi,saj
evdi,dasken auvtou,j.

;Orqrou ('early morning') is also a *hapax legomenon* in GJohn and occurs elsewhere in the NT only in Lukan material: Luke 24.1 and Acts 5.21 (here o;rqrwn).¹⁵ All the people (pa/j o` lao,j) come to Jesus as he sits and teaches them. Schnackenburg describes sitting as 'custom for Jewish teachers'¹⁶ and the Synoptics portray Jesus similarly (Matthew 5.1; Matthew 13.2//Mark 4.1; Luke 5.3). Contrary to these other instances where Jesus sits and teaches, however, the disciples are utterly absent in PA and thus not a constituent element in the controversy or its resolution. Instead, 'all the people' provide the immediate audience for the situation with the adulteress, and form part of the group in whose 'midst' she will stand (John 8.3).

The reference to Jesus sitting down and teaching them, however, may not be original to PA. The oldest Greek manuscript including PA (D) and a few other manuscripts omit this detail. There is no clear reason why someone would excise this information. It is more likely that a scribe may have harmonized this image of Jesus teaching with the previously discussed Synoptic instances where Jesus sits and teaches. Thus, the shorter reading is to be preferred.

Some *f*¹³ manuscripts include 7.53–8.2a, but omit the reference to 'all the people' coming to Jesus as well as the reference to his sitting and teaching. The removal of the rest of 8.2 was done in order to fit PA's location in these manuscripts following Luke 21.38 (which, as Chapter Five observed, was due to the lectionary system). In Luke 21.38, 'all the people' (pa/j o` lao,j) are already coming to hear Jesus teach in the temple, and thus there was no need to repeat this information in 8.2. NA²⁷ is thus correct to include all of John 7.53–8.2 as the oldest reading.

¹⁵ Barrett, *Gospel According to St. John*, 591, lists other Lukan connections in this verse.

¹⁶ Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to St. John*, 2.163. Also Hengel, *Pre-Christian Paul*, 1991), 127n.204.

The presence of $\text{o}^{\text{`}} \text{ la}\text{o}, \text{j}$ ('the people') instead of $\text{o}^{\text{`}} \text{ o}; \text{cl}\text{o}\text{j}$ ('the crowd') is significant for two reasons. First, it supports the theory that PA is not original to GJohn. The previous Johannine context assumes a generic group of people, as does PA, but categorically refers to that group as $\text{o}^{\text{`}} \text{ o}; \text{cl}\text{o}\text{j}$ ('the crowd'; John 7.12, 20, 31, 32, 40, 49).¹⁷ Second, the paucity of Johannine occurrences of $\text{o}^{\text{`}} \text{ la}\text{o}, \text{j}$ (only twice outside PA—John 11.50 and 18.14), and the fact that the phrase $\text{pa}/\text{j} \text{ o}^{\text{`}} \text{ la}\text{o}, \text{j}$ occurs nowhere else in GJohn, draws attention to its presence here, similarly to the manner in which the presence of the scribes in John 8.3 draws attention to itself given their absence elsewhere in the gospel. The interpolator may have $\text{pa}/\text{j} \text{ o}^{\text{`}} \text{ la}\text{o}, \text{j}$ here due to Jesus' pronouncement in John 8.7, where he states that the sinless one should throw the first stone at the adulteress. This statement refers to Deuteronomy 13.10 (ET 13.9) and 17.7, which both state that, in the stoning of an idolater, the witness should raise his hand against the sinner first, followed by the hand of 'all the people' ($\text{panto. j tou/ laou/}$). If this is the case, the presence of 'all the people' in John 8.2 is a further indication that, far from being sloppy, the interpolator was quite purposeful.¹⁸

^{8.3}:Agousin de. oi` grammatei/j kai. oi` Farisai/oi gunai/ka evpi. moiceia| kateilhmme, nhn kai. sth, santej auvth.n evn me, sw| ^{8.4}le, gousin auvtw/| \ dida, skale(au[th h` gunh. katei, lhptai evpV auvtofw, rw| moiceuome, nh\ ^{8.5}evn de. tw/| no, mw| h`mi/n Mwus/h/j evnetei, lato ta.j toiau, taj liqa, zein. su. ou/n ti, le, geijÈ

Jesus' opponents emerge in the narrative as the 'scribes and the Pharisees.' As mentioned already, John 8.3 is the sole occurrence of $\text{grammateu}, \text{j}$ in GJohn, further increasing the possibility that PA is not original to GJohn. As well as underscoring GJohn's omission of the scribes,¹⁹ their presence in PA underscores the interpolator's inclusion of them. Chapter Four argued that the interpolator includes

¹⁷ John A. Dennis, *Jesus' Death and the Gathering of True Israel: The Johannine Appropriation of Restoration Theology in the Light of John 11.47–52* (WUNT 2.217; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 256: 'Here [$\text{la}\text{o}, \text{j}$] seems to be more or less synonymous with $\text{o}; \text{cl}\text{o}\text{j}$.'

¹⁸ It would also mean that Dennis, *Jesus' Death*, 256, is wrong to state, 'In 8.2, there seems to be no special connotation to [$\text{la}\text{o}, \text{j}$].'

¹⁹ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 145.

them here in order to buttress the Torah authority of Jesus' opponents with practitioners of grapho-literacy, and this suggestion will be important again for Chapter Eight.

The 'scribes and the Pharisees' bring with them 'a woman who had been caught in adultery' and place her before Jesus. Codex D and 1071 at this point state that the woman was caught in sin (α`μαρτια, α) rather than adultery. This is possibly an echo of the account of the woman that Papias describes and Eusebius attributes to the *Gos. Heb.* in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.17.²⁰

Two questions appear often in discussions of these verses: (1) Was the woman married?;²¹ and (2) Did the Pharisees have the authority to enforce capital punishment?²² Neither is crucial to the interpretation of the passage and neither seems to be an interest of the interpolator. He identifies the woman simply as an adulteress with no explicit comment on her marital status. And, regardless of Jewish judiciary historical realities, at the level of the narrative the reader is intended to see this as a trial *scene* since the adulteress is placed evn me, sw| ('in the midst' or 'in the middle') in the same way Peter is evn me, sw| in his Lukan 'trial' (Luke 22.55), Peter and John are placed evn tw| / me, sw| of the Jewish leadership for questioning (Acts 4.7), and Jesus is interrogated by the high priest eivj me, son in his trial (Mark 14.60). With this phrase the author encourages the reader to see that the Jewish leadership as prosecution makes accusations against the adulteress as defendant. Whether a previous court had 'officially' sentenced her, or even if the present circumstance is an 'official' court, is a non-issue.

Like the question of the Pharisees and Herodians concerning the paying of the poll-tax to Caesar (Mark 12.13–18), this question was intended to trap Jesus

²⁰ See Beasley-Murray, *John*, 144n.a; Brown, *Gospel According to John I–XII*, 333; Ehrman, 'Jesus and the Adulteress,' 24–44; Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 567–8.

²¹ For various discussions, see Beasley-Murray, *John*, 145; Joseph Blinzler, 'Die Strafe für Ehebruch in Bibel und Halacha: Zur Auslegung von Joh viii 5,' *NTS* 4 (1957–1958): 36–38 (specifically with reference to LXX usage of μοιχευ, ein); Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 335; Eisler, 'Jesus,' 307n.2; Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 309; Bonnie Thurston, *Women in the New Testament: Questions and Commentary* (CTNT; New York, Crossroad, 1998), 86; Watson, 'Jesus and the Adulteress,' 102–5.

²² Jeremias, 'Zur Geschichtlichkeit,' 148–50. Derrett, 'Law,' 9, 10–11, suggests (unpersuasively) that a lynch mob formed in order to bypass legal formalities. On the issue in general, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave* (2 vols.; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1.328–72 (PA discussed on 1.368–9).

(John 8.6a) with an interpretive conundrum. If Jesus fails to support the stoning of the adulteress, he thereby fails to support the Mosaic Law. However, if he fails to free the woman, he thereby sacrifices his reputation as a friend to outcasts and possibly risks trouble with Roman law (if, in fact, Jews did not have the authority to enact capital punishment).²³ The Greek text reveals that the primary issue was the Mosaic Law in John 8.5b. The pronominal *su*, appears first in the clause for emphasis—the Jewish leaders are ‘inviting Jesus to set himself against Moses.’²⁴ This challenge for Jesus to acquiesce or usurp Moses is crucial to understanding John 8.6, 8, discussed in the next chapter.

^{8.6}tou/to de. e;legon peira,zontej auvto,n(i[na e;cwsin kathgorei/n auvtou/.o` de. VIhsou/j ka,tw ku,yaj tw/| daktu,lw| kate,grafen eivj th.n gh/n.^{8.7}w`j de. evpe,menon evrwtw/ntej auvto,n(avne,kuyen kai. ei=pen auvtoi/j\ o` avnama,rthtoj u`mw/n prw/toj evpV auvth.n bale,tw li,qon.^{8.8}kai. pa,lin kataku,yaj e;grafen eivj th.n gh/n.

John 8.6a states plainly that the intentions of the Jewish leaders were malicious—‘so that they might have (something) to accuse of him.’ Several scholars view 8.6a as a later interpolation.²⁵ Young claims 8.6a disrupts the narrative flow and that *peira, zontej* (‘putting him to the test’) and *kathgorei/n* (‘to accuse’) ‘betray the hand of a later scribe who desired to emphasize his understanding of the evil intent of the Pharisees who brought the woman caught in adultery.’²⁶ Though he produces a creative reading, his analysis ultimately fails. There is certainly textual evidence of the *instability* of 8.6a. D et al. include this statement after the *auvtw/|* in 8.4. The D text changes the subject from the implied ‘they’ of the third singular verb to ‘the priests’ (*oi[i`erei/j*),

²³ Augustine, *Ennarat. Ps.* 51.8 (LFHCC): ‘As though in a double trap they were trying to catch the wisdom of God.’

²⁴ Barrett, *Gospel According to St. John*, 591. Likewise, Stan Harstine, *Moses as a Character in the Fourth Gospel: A Study of Ancient Reading Techniques* (JSNTSup 229; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 166; Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 886–7; Newman and Nida, *Translator’s*, 259.

²⁵ In addition to Young and Lietzmann, noted in the main text, see U. Becker, *Jesus*, 56–58; Knust, ‘Early Christian Re-Writing,’ 524–5.

²⁶ Young, ‘Save the Adulteress,’ 61. Gench, *Back*, 145–7, cites Young favourably.

exchanges the simple participle for the complex *evkpeira, zonte j*, and has the nominal *kathgori, an* as the object of the subjunctive instead of the infinitive. The latter variant is also witnessed by M, which moves the whole phrase to follow 8.11. Von Soden included 8.6a in his reconstruction of PA, m.²⁷ In his criticism of von Soden, Lietzmann claims that the idea that 8.6a is a later interpolation based on Luke 6.7 and John 6.6 ‘war die communis opinio der neueren Kritiker,’ citing the instability of 8.6a’s location specifically: ‘Wer die Richtigkeit dieser opinio bezweifelt, der wird es begreiflich machen müssen, daß es gerade diese anderswoher entlehnten, in ihrem Zweck durchsichtigen Worte sind, die so auffällig den Platz wechseln.’²⁸ Lietzmann is correct that 8.6a’s locations in D M and 1071 need explanation, but a clear one is not forthcoming. However, since there is no textual evidence of PA omitting 8.6a, I prefer the reading of von Soden and NA²⁷ in retaining 8.6a. Furthermore, although Young builds his case on the argument that 8.6a is an interpolation that changes the entire tone of the narrative, the ironic tone persists even if it is removed. The scribes and Pharisees address Jesus as ‘Teacher’ (8.4), yet only ‘the people’ were present when Jesus was engaged in teaching (8.2). The *pa, lin* (‘again’) and the imperfect *e; rceto* and *evdi, dasken* (8.2) suggest that it was the habit of Jesus to teach the people in the Temple, with the Jews being excluded from this statement, though undoubtedly Jewish leaders were in the Temple at the same time. That is, though the Jews came to Jesus, they are not part of the group that ‘was coming’; though they call him ‘Teacher,’ they are not part of the group whom ‘he was teaching.’²⁹ Even if 8.6a is an interpolation, it is, exegetically, an appropriate one that only makes explicit what is already implicit in the narrative.

Schnackenburg connects 8.6a to the Synoptic controversy narratives,³⁰ but a more direct parallel exists between 8.6a and Johannine tradition. In John 6.6 the narrator explains that Jesus’ prior question to Philip in 6.5 was intended to ‘test’

²⁷ von Soden, *Schriften*, 1.1.500, 2.427.

²⁸ Lietzmann, ‘H. von Sodens Ausgabe des NT,’ 46.

²⁹ Young, ‘Save the Adulteress,’ 68–69, claims the Pharisees approach Jesus ‘as a recognized teacher coming from Galilee.’ However, as Chapter Six demonstrated, ‘a recognized teacher from Galilee’ is an oxymoron for the Johannine Jewish leadership.

³⁰ Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to St. John*, 2.165.

Philip. Though in 6.6 Jesus is the tester, while in 8.6a the ‘scribes and the Pharisees’ are the testers, the phrase is almost identical.³¹

John 8.6: tou/to de. e;legon peira,zontej auvto,n

John 6.6: tou/to de. e;legen peira,zwn auvto,n

This parallel strengthens PA’s connection with Johannine tradition, but before any unwarranted conclusions are drawn, one must also note another verbal parallel that closely follows this one in the same verse. This parallel is between John 8.6a and Luke 6.7 regarding the Jews’ intentions to ‘accuse’ Jesus.³²

John 8.6: i[na e;cwsin kathgorei/n auvtou/

Luke 6.7: i[na eu[rwsin kathgorei/n auvtou/

Strengthening this latter parallel between John 8.6a and Luke 6.7 is that both verses share the common subject of ‘the scribes and the Pharisees’ (except in D and 1071, which rename ‘the scribes and the Pharisees’ from 8.2 as ‘the priests’ in 8.6).

What may one say of this state of affairs? Scholars often reference the Johannine and/or Lukan parallel in John 8.6 as evidence for Johannine or non-Johannine authenticity for the pericope.³³ However, the only certain thing that this particular example (two clauses within the same verse of PA with near identical verbal parallels to two separate canonical gospels) *proves* is that the composition history of PA, and its eventual inclusion in the canonical gospels, is extremely complex and will not suffer simplistic explanations.³⁴ This example also explains why disagreement over the issue of Johannine or Lukan authenticity for PA persists—there is sufficient evidence to support both conclusions. The underlying assumption of scholars who point to verbal parallels as *evidence* of a previous source is that the verbal similarities are to be found in the previous source. However, it is equally likely that a particularly astute interpolator could have crafted PA to fit more

³¹ Brown, *Gospel According to John I–XII*, 333; Heil, ‘Rejoinder,’ 363; John Paul Heil, ‘The Story of Jesus and the Adulteress (John 7,53–8,11) Reconsidered,’ *Biblica* 72 (1991): 184; Köstenberger, *John*, 246.

³² Brown, *Gospel According to John I–XII*, 333.

³³ See survey in Keith, ‘Recent,’ n.p.

³⁴ Complicating this state of affairs further is that PA contains another verbal parallel to Johannine tradition. Jesus’ statement to the adulteress to ‘sin no longer’ in 8.11 is identical to John 5.14. See p.166 below.

closely with a particular Jesus tradition prior to or during its textual inclusion. Again, this does not prove the interpolator did so, but one must acknowledge it as possible and there is every reason to believe PA's interpolator inserted the story with sensitivity to its Johannine context.

If the first half of John 8.6 seems to be borrowed from multiple gospel sources, it is balanced by the second half of the verse, which stands utterly alone in Jesus tradition. When the Pharisees challenge Jesus publicly to disavow allegiance to Moses, his response is to bend down and write in the ground.³⁵ The manuscript evidence demonstrates the curiosity of interpreters of Jesus' writing at this point, as several variants provide further explanations. K 579 and others add *mh, prospoiou, meno j* in order to explain that Jesus began writing 'without seeming' to have heard them; i.e., he was not blatantly ignoring them. As noted previously, Jerome suggested that Jesus wrote each of their sins in the ground,³⁶ and 264 adds that detail here while U P 73 331 364 700 782 1592 place it after 8.8 (the tenth-century Armenian Edschmiadzin Codex also includes it but references only one instance of writing). Robinson observes that in addition to this element, the members of the Patmos family (e.g., U) 'then change the *oi de akousante j* of 8.9 into *kai anaginwskonte j*,' and refers to this variant as 'certainly a more appropriate reading, considering the altered text.'³⁷ Metzger is correct that such elaborations are intended 'to satisfy pious curiosity' and are thus later accretions to the text.³⁸ Chapter One rehearsed the interpretive options for Jesus' writing and concluded that the significant element of Jesus' actions in John 8.6 and 8.8 is *that* Jesus wrote, not *what* he wrote. This phenomenon, along with the fact that he writes 'on the ground,' will be treated extensively in the next chapter, but three things are significant to note here before proceeding.

First, as reiteration, this is the only place in the Jesus tradition proper, canonical or non-canonical, where *gra, fw* or its cognates are attached to Jesus.

³⁵ Godet, *Commentary*, 646n.15, notes that some manuscripts qualify Jesus' writing in 8.6: 'E G H K 90 Mnn. add *mh prospoioumeno j* (*without seeming* to have seen or heard); some Mnn. ... *kai. prospoioumeno j* (*and pretending* to write).' NA²⁷ lists K and 579 as witnesses to the former variant and does not mention the latter variant at all.

³⁶ Jerome, *Pelag.* 2.17.

³⁷ Robinson, 'Preliminary,' 54.

³⁸ Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 190.

Other texts portray Jesus in literate terms (cf. Luke 4; *Inf. Gos. Thom.*), and outside of Jesus tradition, the fourth-century *Dialogue of Adamantius* also applies *gra, fw* to Jesus when it claims he wrote the gospel,³⁹ but John 8.6, 8 is a unique occurrence in gospel literature.

Second, there is some variation in the manuscripts with regards to the verbs of John 8.6 and 8.8.⁴⁰ The majority reading has the compound *katagra, fw* at 8.6 and the simple *gra, fw* at 8.8, both imperfects. The earliest manuscript to include PA, Codex D (Bezae), includes the compound verb in 8.6 and 8.8. A number of manuscripts contain the simple *gra, fw* at 8.6.⁴¹ Geerlings presents the *f*¹³ text as including the simple verb at both locations, but also notes the compound as a variant at 8.6 in MS 174.⁴² Likewise, Wikgren uses the simple verb at 8.6 and 8.8 in his critical edition of the lectionary text of PA, but notes that *l* 364 *l* 1231 and *l* 1492 (his ‘Fam. 2a’) contain the variant compound verb at 8.6.⁴³ NA²⁷ prefers the majority reading of *katagra, fw* at 8.6 and *gra, fw* at 8.8 (as does von Soden⁴⁴), and this combination best explains the others. It is more plausible that, given the absence of the compound verb elsewhere in the NT, scribes of *f*¹³ et al. replaced it with the more common simple verb. It is also more likely that Codex D’s scribe chose to harmonize the simple verb in his exemplar at 8.8 with the compound verb at 8.6 than that he introduced the compound form at both locations in place of the simple verbs. Codex D has harmonized 8.8 to mirror 8.6 also by adding *tw| / daktu, lw|* after *kataku, ya j*, as noted by von Soden who likewise prefers the majority reading of the compound verb at 8.6 and simple at 8.8.⁴⁵ It would be more difficult to explain why, if 8.6 and 8.8 had either both compound verbs or both simple verbs, a scribe would alter one not to match the other. Positing the majority reading as the original reading does not help explain the wildcard reading of, for example, 28, which

³⁹ E.g., Adamantius, *Dialogue* 2.13. See further Chapter Nine.

⁴⁰ Beyond critical editions, see Rius-Camps, ‘Pericope,’ 401–2.

⁴¹ K U G L *f*¹ et al. See also the next footnote.

⁴² Geerlings, *Family 13*, 128. *f*¹³ et al. also contain the variant of the aorist simple verb at 8.6 rather than the majority imperfect. M et al. have the aorist at 8.8.

⁴³ Wikgren, ‘Lectionary Text,’ 190–91.

⁴⁴ Von Soden, *Schriften*, 1.1.523, 2.427.

⁴⁵ Cf. von Soden, *Schriften*, 1.1.493, 496. Again, for Codex D’s text juxtaposed to the Byzantine text, see Tischendorf, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 1.830–35

inverses the majority reading and attests *gra, fw* at 8.6 and *katagra, fw* at 8.8.⁴⁶ On the one hand, the seeming interchangeable nature of the simple and complex verbs in the manuscript tradition confirms the conclusion of Chapter Two that when the verbs appear together in biblical tradition there is no observable difference in their meanings. On the other hand, the present goal is not to explain every textual variant, but answer why *katagra, fw* appears at all in the manuscripts given that it is absent elsewhere in the NT. The reading of John 8.6, 8 in Chapter Eight will provide further warrant that the editors of critical editions are correct to assume that the majority reading is the original.

Third, and in anticipation of Chapter Nine, the fact that John 8.6, 8 is an otherwise unattested action of Jesus means that the writing is the primary point of investigation for PA's insertion into GJohn. This is a crucial point—there is nothing in PA's narrative outside John 8.6, 8 that does not occur elsewhere in GJohn or the Synoptics, whether it be conflict with the Jewish leadership or a sexually-charged narrative between Jesus and a known female sinner. I will return to these issues later, but it is important here to note their significance. I continue now with my analysis of PA and John 8.7, which forms the interior content that Jesus' writing in John 8.6 and 8.8 surrounds.

Jesus' response to his opponents in John 8.7 regarding the stoning of the adulteress is one of the best-known verses in the entire Bible—'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her' (NRSV).⁴⁷ Thatcher describes this response as 'genius' for its ability to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Mosaic punishment for the adulteress but simultaneously render the enacting of that punishment impossible.⁴⁸ While Deuteronomy 22.21 prescribes stoning for sexual sins, Deuteronomy 13.9 and 17.7, which contain the tradition Jesus references here (instructions on who throws the first stone), technically refer to the stoning of idolaters. These two Old Testament contexts require the same punishment for different sins and, according to Jesus, the same qualification for the executioners.

⁴⁶ My thanks to Jennifer Wright Knust for alerting me to the reading of MS 28, which she examined personally.

⁴⁷ There are minor textual variants at John 8.7. (1) The common combination of D and 1071 omit *auvto, n*. (2) Instead of *auvtoi, j*, E G H 180 579 1505 1184 have *pro. j auvtou, j*. (3) Instead of altering *auvtoi, j*, M omits it altogether.

⁴⁸ Thatcher, *Jesus*, 100.

As mentioned previously, Deuteronomy 13.9 and 17.7 also require ‘all the people’ to follow the witness in stoning the sinner. Thus, the presence of *pa/j o` lao, j* in John 8.2 may indicate that corporate Israel is the audience for Jesus’ interpretive showdown with the Jewish leadership while the life of the adulteress depends upon the outcome.⁴⁹ If this is correct, it significantly heightens the dramatic element in the narrative. Not only are the witnesses of the adulteress’ sin presumably present, since she had been caught in the act (8.3), ‘all the people’ are present and ready to join in stoning her, underscoring the essential legality of the punishment of the adulteress in terms of the Mosaic Law. Israel and its leaders are therefore posed to follow Moses’ instructions, with only Jesus obstructing the delivery of the prescribed sentence.

^{8.9}*oi` de. avkou, santej evxh, rconto ei-j kaqV ei-j avrx, menoi avpo. tw/n presbute, rwn kai. katelei, fqh mo, noj kai. h` gunh. evn me, sw| ou=sa.*

Apparently accepting the legitimacy of Jesus’ response in John 8.7, the adulteress’ would-be executioners leave the scene in 8.9, one at a time beginning with the eldest. Several manuscripts contain ‘explanatory glosses’ in order to add further detail to the departure of Jesus’ enemies.⁵⁰ For example, U L f¹³ 700 et al. state that the Jews left from the elders *e[wj tw/n evsca, twn. E G H K 180 205 579* et al. all claim that they departed *u`po. th/j suneidh, sewj evlegco, menoi.*

What happened to ‘all the people’ from 8.2? Did they leave with the Pharisees once the controversy was over? The text does not say, explicitly, but it may be that *oi` avkou, santej* (‘those hearing’) is inclusive of both the leadership and the people, with the Jewish leadership (here ‘the elders’) simply being the first of the group to leave. Alternatively, *presbute, roi* may here be used not in a formal sense but as an adjective, with the entire group of ‘those hearing’ (leadership and crowd) leaving, beginning with the ‘eldest.’⁵¹ Despite the exodus from the scene, however, the woman is still left *evn me, sw|* (‘in the

⁴⁹ Also, Minear, ‘Writing,’ 26.

⁵⁰ Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 190.

⁵¹ So Godet, *Commentary*, 649.

middle/midst') even though she is alone with Jesus. This suggests that, for the woman and PA's reader(s), the proper courtroom is not the one that exists before the people (8.2) and/or the scribes and the Pharisees (8.3, 9), but the one that exists solely before the proper judge—Jesus. Jesus' role as proper judge is a common theme between PA and GJohn.⁵²

^{8.10}avnakū,yaj de. o` VIhsou/j e=ipen auvth/|\ gu,nai(pou/ eivsinÈ ouvdei,j se kate,krinenÈ ^{8.11}h` de. ei=pen\ ouvdei,j(ku,rie.ei=pen de. o` VIhsou/j\ ouvde. evgw, se katakri,nw\ poreu,ou(îkai.Đ avpo. tou/ nu/n mhke,ti a`ma,rtane.

Commenting on 8.10, Brown simply offers the following: 'Surprise? Or gentle sarcasm?'⁵³ Though he makes no attempt to resolve it, Brown raises an interesting question. Is Jesus here genuinely surprised that no one is left to accuse the woman or is he poking fun at his departed opponents? Schnackenburg rejects both possibilities and sees Jesus' question only as a vehicle to get the woman to speak.⁵⁴ Lindars describes the question as 'a delicate way of preparing the woman for his own verdict.'⁵⁵ Whatever the purpose of Jesus' question, the woman answers him in 8.11a, 'No one, Lord.'⁵⁶

Several variants here attempt to make explicit what the narrative implies in the interaction between Jesus and the woman and are thus likely later additions. L^f⁴³ 700 and some others add that Jesus looked (avnable,yaj) at the woman and saw (ei=don) her before talking to her, while U includes only the latter variant. E F G K 1079 et al. add evkei/noi oi` kath,goroi, sou after Jesus' question, 'Where are they?'

Jesus responds to the woman's answer by instructing her to 'go' and 'sin no longer' in 8.11b. (Interestingly, in this verse D's Greek text differs from its Latin

⁵² See further Chapters Six and Eight.

⁵³ Brown, *Gospel According to John I–XII*, 334.

⁵⁴ Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to St. John*, 2.167.

⁵⁵ Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 312.

⁵⁶ Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 336, remarks that the vocative ku,rie 'means "sir" as readily as "lord" or "Lord."'

text, with the Greek omitting the connective *kai*, and the Latin including *et*.⁵⁷) The inherent authority of this statement is evident not only in Jesus' pronouncement, which is reminiscent of his self-posturing with reference to the Mosaic Law in the Beatitudes ('But I say,' Matthew 5.22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44), but also in his command to the woman, given in the second person imperative *mhke, ti a`ma, rtane* ('sin no longer'). Arguments for the woman's innocence fail precisely at this point, since Jesus' command assumes the guilt of the woman,⁵⁸ but some scholars have questioned whether the command itself is original to PA.⁵⁹ The *Didascalia* and its descendent, the *Apostolic Constitutions*, both fail to include this phrase in their version of PA. Lindars finds additional support for this position in the fact that the phrase 'sin no longer' also appears in John 5.14.

John 8.11: *mhke, ti a`ma, rtane*

John 5.14: *mhke, ti a`ma, rtane*

Thus for Lindars, 'It is reasonable to suppose that it was added at the same time as the story came into the MS. tradition of John.'⁶⁰ As PA stands, 'Jesus is giving with one hand [what] he is taking away with another' since he does not condemn her and yet places a further yoke upon her.'⁶¹ One must initially acknowledge that the later addition of Jesus' command is technically possible. PA's interpolator demonstrates that he is concerned with PA's narrative context, though not necessarily enough to cover every seam in his insertion. However, this theory does not give due weight to the fact that nowhere does the manuscript tradition omit Jesus' final command. Nor does it consider that Jesus' moral imperative can function as a new opportunity for the adulteress rather than a 'yoke.' Significantly, though, the parallel with John 5.14 provides another point of contact between PA and GJohn.⁶²

2. Summary of PA

⁵⁷ Parker, *Codex Bezae*, 205.

⁵⁸ See the comments included in the excursus on *Susanna* in Keith, 'Recent,' n.p.

⁵⁹ Kinukawa, 'On John 7:53–8:11,' 94–95; Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 312.

⁶⁰ Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 312.

⁶¹ Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 312.

⁶² Heil, 'Rejoinder,' 363; 'Story,' 185.

To summarize this analysis, PA's interpolator presents Jesus as several other gospel conflict stories do—in an interpretive battle with the Jewish leadership. The conflict of PA and its setting at the Temple in Jerusalem fit with the context of John 7, as some of PA's vocabulary (John 8.6, 8.11) also parallels Johannine vocabulary. PA's characters (e.g., the scribes or 'all the people') and other elements of its vocabulary, however, make clear that PA was not originally in GJohn. Together, this evidence suggests that the individual(s) who inserted PA into GJohn paid close attention to the narrative, and narrative location, at which he/they inserted PA. Particularly similar to John 7, in PA, Moses and the Mosaic Law are presented as the impetus for disagreement between Jesus and his contemporaries. Jesus' status vis-à-vis Moses and his level of access to the Mosaic Law is the crucially *central* background for his writing actions in John 8.6, 8. Against this background, PA's interpolator shows that the interpretive battle between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees was over before it ever began.

Chapter Eight

The *Pericope Adulterae* at John 7.53–8.11: The (Divine) Grapho-Literacy of Jesus

‘Inmitten der Geschichte von Jesus und der Ehebrecherin, wie sie sich am Anfang des 8. Kapitels des Johannesevangeliums befindet, schildert der Evangelist zweimal eine Handlung Jesus, die seit alters die Ausleger in Schwierigkeiten bringt.’¹

kai. h` grafh. grafh. qeou/ evstin (Exodus 32.16)

The present chapter gives detailed attention to the dual writing of Jesus in John 8.6, 8 and consists of two sections. The first section will argue that PA describes Jesus’ acts of writing with the vocabulary that Exodus 32.15 (as well as 31.18) employs to describe God’s authorship of the Decalogue. The second section will further argue that PA’s unique image of a grapho-literate Jesus not only coheres with the emphases of John 7 noted in Chapter Six, but with a number of emphases throughout the Johannine narrative. This chapter as a whole therefore continues the argument of previous chapters, namely that one must regard PA’s interpolator as a careful reader of GJohn who purposefully inserted a grapho-literate Jesus at John 7.53–8.11. Chapter Nine will discuss why and when the interpolator inserted PA.

1. John 8.6, 8: Jesus, Moses, and the Writing of the Decalogue

When the scribes and the Pharisees challenge Jesus in John 8.5—‘What, then, do you say?’—his response is to bend down and write in the ground with his finger in John 8.6. After their persistence, he stands, speaks the words of John 8.7, and then returns to writing in the ground. The fact that Jesus’ opponents initially ignore his writing, and then leave only after *hearing* him (John 8.9), confirms that these two actions of writing (that bracket his oral response) are a particular emphasis of the narrator.² For

¹ Schöndorf, ‘Jesus schreibt,’ 91.

² That the narrative reads smoothly without the dual writing raises the possibility that PA’s interpolator added the writing on the ground when he inserted the text into GJohn, though one can neither prove nor disprove this hypothesis with the extant evidence.

the characters in the narrative, Jesus' actions are superfluous. Yet Jesus' writing is anything but superfluous for the interpolator who inserted this text into GJohn. As argued previously, concern over Jesus' literacy and educational qualifications intersect with themes of judgment, the law, and his Galilean origin as both the crowd and the Jewish leadership attempt to identify who Jesus is (not) in John 7. Jesus' demonstration of grapho-literacy (when it follows John 7.52) is a response to, amongst other things, the expectations of the Jews of John 7.15. However, the narrator's *presentation* of Jesus' writing in John 8.6, 8 provides a further meaning to the writing beyond being a claim for grapho-literacy, as the vocabulary employed evokes a *specific* grapho-literacy. In this light, one must note that, though the adulteress' punishment is outlined in Deuteronomy, her sin itself is forbidden by the seventh commandment of the Decalogue.³

1.1 The Writing of the Decalogue (Exodus 32.15–16 LXX)

According to Exodus 31.18/Deuteronomy 9.10, the Decalogue was written by the finger of God (tw/| daktu, lw| tou/ qeou/). In John 8.6, Jesus is said to write in the ground with his finger (tw/| daktu, lw|). This resonance with Exodus 31.18/Deuteronomy 9.10 has led numerous scholars to interpret Jesus' writing in the ground in terms of God's authorship of the Decalogue.⁴ Indeed, this is one of the earliest interpretations of Jesus' writing in John 8.6, 8, traceable to Ambrose.⁵ However, the 'finger' reference itself does not necessarily imply a connection between John 8.6 and Exodus 31.18/Deuteronomy 9.10. In Luke 11.20, Jesus claims to have cast out demons by the finger of God (daktu, lw| qeou/), and there is no reason here to posit influence from Exodus 31.18/Deuteronomy 9.10.⁶ Nevertheless, I will affirm this interpretation of Jesus' writing, though in a slightly nuanced fashion. One reason to affirm a 'Decalogue interpretation' of John 8.6, 8 is that, in 8.5, Jesus is asked specifically to stand opposed to Moses in his assessment of the required punishment from the Mosaic Law of a Decalogue sin. A more fundamental reason exists as well, one which other scholarly explanations of this

³ For the differing orders of commandments, see the brief note by Watson, *Paul*, 308n.62.

⁴ See survey in Chapter One.

⁵ Ambrose, *Epistle* 68 (26) (385–387 CE).

⁶ Allison, *Intertextual Jesus*, 53–57, instead sees Exodus 8.19 behind Luke (Q) 11.20.

interpretation have completely ignored.⁷ Chapter Two hinted at this reason—the peculiar usage of *katagra, fw* and *gra, fw* in John 8.6, 8 mirrors the usage of the exact same verbs to describe the writing of the Decalogue on the two tablets of testimony in Exodus 32.15. Thus, though scholars are correct to see the parallel between the writing *instrument*—the finger—in John 8.6 and Exodus 31.18/Deuteronomy 31.18, the identification of a parallel *referent*—the Decalogue—is most clearly affirmed by the verbs of these passages.⁸

1.1.1 Exodus 32.15 LXX

Exodus 32.15 narrates Moses' return down Mount Sinai with the first set of tablets from God and includes a description of the tablets. Translated literally, it reads:

And turning back, Moses went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of testimony were in his hands, stone tablets having been written (*katagegramme, nai*) on both of their sides, from here and from here they had been written (*h=san gegramme, nai*).

This text is the only place in canonical tradition where the tablets are said to contain writing on each side⁹ and one of only three places in the LXX where *katagra, fw* and *gra, fw* appear in parallel (the other two being 2 Chronicles 20.34 and 1 Maccabees 14.18, 26 [ET 14.18, 27]). The two Greek participles translate the same underlying Hebrew participle (~ybituK.), confirming their synonymous usage. This parallel usage of the verbs, with the compound occurring first, is exactly the manner in which they appear in John 8.6, 8, with the two exceptions that, in PA, *gra, fw* is not part of a periphrastic construction and the verbs are imperfect indicatives. In contrast, in the other two LXX occurrences of both verbs, the simple verb precedes the compound. Given that *katagra, fw* is a

⁷ A notable exception is Rius-Camps, 'Origen Lucano,' 171–2, which I discovered after already having completed this study. His observations are brief and part of a larger argument that PA originally appeared in Luke's Gospel and that the genesis of PA is to be found in Luke's omission of Mark 10.1–12: 'Lucas, que ha omitido la perícopa marcana sobre el repudio de la mujer, se inspira en ella para componer otra de nuevo cuño, la de la mujer adúltera' (170). I affirm neither of these suggestions.

⁸ Note that the argument is not that Jesus wrote the *words* of the Decalogue in John 8.6, 8, but rather that the interpolator purposefully parallels Jesus' writing with God's authorship of the Decalogue by employing similar vocabulary.

⁹ Hyatt, *Exodus*, 307. Reaching a logical conclusion, later Jewish tradition would divide the writing equally on the tablets. Philo, *Decal.* 50, separates the Ten Commandments into two sets of five, one for each tablet. Josephus, *Ant.* 3.101, 138, divides them into two sets of five with two and a half commandments on each side of each tablet. Apparently God was a symmetrical author.

hapax legomenon in the NT, and that it is paralleled with *gra, fw* in a manner that occurs only once in the LXX, it is overwhelmingly likely that PA's interpolator is here alluding to this LXX passage, and I will return to this theory shortly for further articulation. First, however, Exodus 32.16 gives an important further description of the tablets.

1.1.2 Exodus 32.16 LXX

After the description of the two tablets of testimony and the writing contained within them, Exodus 32.16 explicitly attributes authorship of the first tablets to God himself:

And the tablets were the work of God (*kai. ai` pla,kej e;rgon qeou/ h=san*), and the writing is the writing of God (*kai. h` grafh. grafh. qeou/ evstin*), having been chiselled (*kekolamme, nh*) in the tablets.

In context, the authorship of the tablets, by God, on stone, serves at least three functions. First, the location of stone provides a certain level of permanence, as the commandments are inscribed on the most durable material available at the time and described in 32.15 as tablets 'of testimony.' In light of the commemorative and foundational role attributed to the Decalogue in Jewish tradition, as well as the succeeding context in Exodus 32, the tenses of the copulatives in Exodus 32.16 perhaps deserve attention. Literally, the passage reads that the tablets *were* God's work, but the writing *is* God's writing.¹⁰ Soon after Moses' reception of the initial pair of tablets, his anger will supersede the durability of the stone in 32.19 when he smashes them to the ground. However, the words, written by the finger of God (31.18), will survive. God promises to write them again in 34.1 and then delegates the task to Moses in 34.27. Three versions of the Decalogue occur in the Old Testament (Exodus 20, Exodus 34, and Deuteronomy 5), and thus, even in the context of PA's interpolator and the present day, though the tablets *were*, the writing *is*.¹¹

¹⁰ As the translation above shows, I take the second copulative of 32.16 as an independent verb, modified by the circumstantial participle, rather than as part of a periphrastic construction. The Greek reads: *kai. ai` pla,kej e;rgon qeou/ h=san, kai. h` grafh. grafh. qeou/ evstin kekolamme, nh evn tai/j plaxi, n.*

¹¹ For a tradition history of the Decalogue tradition, see David H. Aaron, *Etched in Stone: The Emergence of the Decalogue* (London: T & T Clark, 2006).

Second, and related to the first point, Exodus 32.16, along with 24.12 and 31.18, emphasizes the divine source of the Decalogue. Exodus 32.16 is quoted above, but just prior to this passage, in Exodus 24.12, God claims to have written the tablets himself. Then 31.18 articulates that after God finished speaking on Sinai, he handed Moses ‘the two tablets of the covenant, tablets of stone, *written with the finger of God*’ (NRSV, emphasis added). Exodus 24.12 and 31.18 therefore stand in contrast to 34.1, 28—the first tablets are written by God and given to Moses; the second tablets are cut by Moses and Moses rewrites what God had written on the first set. Exodus 24.12, 31.18, and 32.16 provide two distinctions in the text by emphasising God’s authorship of the Decalogue in the first set of tablets. The first distinction is between the true god of the Israelites and false gods. The words written on stone derive from God, in contrast to the Golden Calf that derives from their jewellery and the hands of Aaron. While Aaron laboured to form an idol, God laboured to form the ten sayings that are the core of the Torah. The second distinction is between the human and divine contribution in the Israelite reception of the Mosaic Law. As noted, some texts in Exodus have Moses functioning as God’s scribe, and elsewhere in the Pentateuch God’s law(s) and commandments are said to have come by the ‘hand of Moses’ (evn ceiri. Mwush/).¹² Exodus 32.16, however, concerns the first and original pair and (along with 24.12 and 31.18) leaves no room for ambiguity—Moses delivered and shattered the Decalogue, but its origins are in holy penmanship. Moses is here, then, only the deliverer of God’s words, carrying them down the mountain to the people (32.15); but ai` pla,kej e;rgon qeou/ h=san, kai. h` grafh. grafh. qeou/ evstin (32.16). Critical to note is that, though the figure of Moses becomes conflated with the Mosaic text, the law contains explicit statements that distinguish between Moses’ role as mediator and God’s role as source.¹³

Inextricably related to this point regarding the distinctions found in Exodus 32.16 between God and the Golden Calf on the one hand, and God and Moses on the

¹² Leviticus 26.46; Numbers 4.37, 41, 45, 49, 9.23, 10.13, 15.23, 36.13. Cf. *Baruch* 2.28. See Watson, *Paul*, 317n.5.

¹³ This emphasis was not lost on the early Christian author of *Barnabas*. Not only does he highlight the ‘finger of God’ from Exodus 31.18 (*Barn.* 4.6–7, 14.2), but also makes explicit that Moses received the law in a subservient position: ‘But how did we receive it? Learn! Moses received it *as a servant*, but the *Lord himself* gave it to us. . . .’ (*Barn.* 14.4; Holmes; emphases added).

other, is a third point—Moses’ role as deliverer of the first set of tablets and scribe of the second set establishes him as the primary Jewish text-broker. Though a written text is not yet involved, Exodus 20.18 establishes Moses’ role as mediator: ‘When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance, and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die”’ (NRSV). ‘From that moment he became God’s emissary or agent . . . and his vice-regent on earth.’¹⁴ This role as mediator in Exodus 20.18 transforms into an explicit (often grapho-literate) text-broker elsewhere in the Pentateuch and is a sustained *topos* in Second Temple literature, as reflected by, for example, *Jub.* 1.5, 7, 26, 2.1, 23.32, 50.13;¹⁵ *Sir* 24.23; Philo’s *Mos.* 1.1 and *Cher.* 49;¹⁶ Galatians 3.19; *4 Ezra* (2 Esd) 14;¹⁷ and even some later texts.¹⁸ By the time Paul pens 2 Corinthians 3.13–18, there is a complete conflation of Moses the person and Moses the text.¹⁹ To claim that Moses is on one’s side in an interpretive battle is to claim that one has *the* authoritative interpretation, as the scribes and the Pharisees in John 8.5 do when challenging Jesus. Importantly, their status as text-brokers in their own culture is derivative of Moses’ status as text-broker; their access to Mosaic Law is derivative of Moses’ access to Mosaic Law. According to the interpolator of PA, however, Jesus’ access to Mosaic Law is equal to a text-broker upon whom Moses himself was dependent.

1.2 The Writing on the Ground (John 8.6, 8)

¹⁴ Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (NovTSup 14; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 286, see also p.290. Likewise, Watson, *Paul*, 279.

¹⁵ *Jubilees* identifies itself as nothing less than what God told ‘Moses on Mount Sinai when he went up to receive the tablets of the Law and the commandment by the word of the Lord’ (from the title, as translated by O. S. Wintermute in *OTP*). See further Aaron, *Etched*, 17, 21; Snyder, *Teachers*, 159.

¹⁶ Cf. Snyder, *Teachers*, 133.

¹⁷ Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 204, notes that *4 Ezra* 14 ‘contains the novel idea that Ezra received the Scriptures directly from God, thus repeating Moses’ reception of the Torah on Sinai. Ezra is put on a par with Moses. . . .’ She also draws attention to the Jewish historian Eupolemus, who ‘portrays Moses as the first wise man who gave the alphabet to the Jews . . . [and] was the first to write down laws’ (264).

¹⁸ *1 Clem.* 43.1. Note also that in Shepherd of Hermas, Hermas is commanded to write (Herm. *Vis.* 5.5–7; cf. Herm. *Sim.* 9.1.1, 10.1.1) the ‘twelve commandments’ (Herm. *Man.* 12.3.2) just as Moses was commanded to write the ‘ten commandments.’ For further comments on Moses as primary text-broker, see Vermes, *Scripture*, 51–52.

¹⁹ Watson, *Paul*, 281.

I will here provide the first full argument that PA's portrayal of Jesus' grapho-literacy in John 8.6, 8 is an allusion to the grapho-literacy of God portrayed in Exodus 31.18, 32.15–16. Following this, I will offer an interpretation of this allusion in its Johannine context.

1.2.1 *Detecting the Allusion*

Though all texts are dependent on other texts in one form or another, detecting an allusion to one text in another is not a simple matter. In order to offer methodological grounding for the present proposal, I will here employ Allison's six indices for detecting an allusion between two texts given in his *The Intertextual Jesus*.²⁰ This is necessary in order to guard against seeing an allusion where one does not exist. 'Parallels can be phantoms,' and thus one must ask, 'When is an allusion an allusion and when is it an illusion?'²¹

Allison's first index for detecting an allusion is that 'the history of interpretation either enhances or diminishes the plausibility of a proposed allusion.'²² Though the lexical connections between John 8.6, 8 and Exodus 32.15 have gone unnoticed, the interpretive history amply supports the idea that Jesus' writing in these passages should be understood in terms of God's authorship of the Decalogue. This is especially the case in the earliest interpretations of Jesus' writing, upon which I focus here. Ambrose, the earliest known interpreter of Jesus' writing, connects John 8.6's reference to Jesus' use of the 'finger' and Exodus 31.18's 'finger of God': 'He wrote on the ground with the finger with which He had written the Law.'²³ Augustine makes a similar comment: 'What else did he signify to you when he wrote on the ground with his finger? For the Law was written by the finger of God.'²⁴ Augustine affirms that the writing of Jesus in John 8.6, 8 parallels God's authorship of the law in a number of other contexts as well.²⁵ The earliest history of

²⁰ Allison, *Intertextual Jesus*, 10–13.

²¹ Allison, *Intertextual Jesus*, 3, 9, respectively.

²² Allison, *Intertextual Jesus*, 10.

²³ Ambrose, *Epistle* 68 (26) (Beyenka, FC). Ambrose draws the explicit connection between the 'finger' also in *Spir.* 3.3.14–16.

²⁴ Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 33.5.2 (Rettig, FC).

²⁵ See Augustine, *Cons.* 4.17; *Enarrat. Ps.* 102.11 (Eng. 103.11). In *Enarrat. Ps.* 50.8 (Eng. 51.8), Augustine contrasts Moses 'the minister of the Law' to 'Christ the publisher of the Law' (Wilkins, LFHCC).

interpretation thus supports seeing John 8.6, 8 as an allusion to Exodus 31.18 and 32.15–16; although, as Chapter One demonstrated, this is not the only allusion that even Ambrose and Augustine saw in John 8.6, 8.

Significant in this respect is that some of Ambrose's and Augustine's interpretations of John 8.6, 8 stand Jesus' writing, which is applied to sinners, in contrast to the divine writing that records the names of saints in heaven according to Luke 10.20. Ambrose states, 'Consequently, when the Jews made accusation against the adulteress, the Lord Jesus wrote with His finger on the earth. But the just are not written upon the earth, as we read, for to them it is said, "Rejoice, that your names are written in heaven."'”²⁶ Similarly, Augustine: '... He wrote with His finger upon the ground, as if He would indicate that people of the character of these men would be written on earth, and not in heaven, as He also admonished His disciples to rejoice that their names were written in heaven!'”²⁷ This nuance in their interpretation of Jesus' writing is significant because one can trace the tradition of 'God's book' to the exact same narrative, indeed the same chapter of Exodus, that contains God's divine authorship of the Decalogue.²⁸ After the Golden Calf incident and the subsequent slaughter of disobedient Israelites by the Levites, Moses challenges God to wipe him (Moses) 'from your book which you have written' (evk th/j bi,blou sou, h-j e;grayaj; Exodus 32.32) instead of the Israelites as a whole. God responds by stating that his resolve is firm, and that those who sinned against him will indeed be removed 'from my book' (evk th/j bi,blou mou; Exodus 32.33). This understanding of God as an author who is able both to bless his people (giving of the Decalogue; writing names in heaven) and condemn them (blotting names out of his book; writing sinners in the ground) is present in both Exodus and in the Fathers' interpretations of Jesus' actions in John 8.6, 8.²⁹ The proposed John 8.6, 8/Exodus 32.15 allusion is thus supported by an interpretive history that affirms viewing John 8.6, 8 in terms of Exodus 31.18 and Exodus 32.32–33. That is, while the interpretive history does not explicitly support the Exodus 32.15 lexical connection, it does

²⁶ Ambrose, *Job* 4.5.20 (McHugh, FC).

²⁷ Augustine, *Cons.* 4.17 (Salmond, *NPNF*¹).

²⁸ Demsky, 'Writing,' 18, notes that 'the motif of a heavenly Book of Life' was not unique to Israel.

²⁹ The idea of 'heavenly books' or 'books of the living' is widespread in early Christian writings. See 1 Corinthians 15.22; Hebrews 10.17; Revelation 21.27; *1 Clement* 43.1; Herm. *Vis.* 1.3.2; Herm. *Sim.* 2.9 (cf. 5.3.2).

explicitly support connections with that narrative in Exodus. The Fathers clearly interpreted Jesus' actions of writing in terms of God-as-author.

Allison's further indices likewise support the present proposed allusion. The second and third indices for detecting an allusion are based upon grammatical and syntactical similarity, and here it may help to see Exodus 32.15 and John 8.6, 8 together.

Exodus 32.15 LXX

...pla,kej li,qinai
katagegramme,nai evx
 avmfote,rwn tw/n merw/n
 auvtw/n,e;nqen kai. e;nqen
 h=san **gegramme,nai**.

John 8.6, 8

o` de. vIhsou/j ka,tw
 ku,yaj tw/| daktu,lw|
kate,grafen...kai. pa,lin
 kataku,yaj **e;grafen**...

Allison's second index states,

In the absence of explicit citation or undeniable borrowing an allusion will not be credible unless text and intertext share some combination of the following: common vocabulary, common word order, common theme(s), similar imagery, similar structure, similar circumstance(s).³⁰

This particular index offers a strong background against which to see the relationship between John 8.6, 8 and Exodus 32.15. First, there is certainly a common theme and circumstance—Exodus 32.15 describes the writing of the Decalogue while in John 8.5 Jesus is asked to pronounce upon a sinner who had broken one of those inscribed commandments. Additionally, as noted earlier, the Exodus narrative gave birth to seeing Moses as the primary interpreter of the law, and Jesus is challenged specifically to oppose Moses in John 8.5. Second, there is similar vocabulary and word order, with the verbs for writing being primarily in view. In both cases, the compound *katagra, fw* precedes the simple *gra, fw* and the two refer to the exact same action. If one can simplify the texts as such, Exodus 32.15 describes the stones as 'kata-written,' and then as simply 'written'; John 8.6, 8 claims Jesus was first 'kata-writing' and then simply 'writing.'

³⁰ Allison, *Intertextual Jesus*, 11.

In this light, Allison's third index is important, which states that similar vocabulary and word order 'are only corroborative evidence when not commonplace.'³¹ By questioning the rarity or familiarity of a given word, this criterion adds considerable weight to the present argument. First, recall that *katagra, fw* occurs nowhere else in the NT besides John 8.6. Second, beyond the fact that Exodus 32.15 is the only LXX location where the compound verb precedes the simple verb as it does in John 8.6, 8, Exodus 32.15 also is the only text where the compound and simple verbs are used to describe the *exact* same action.³² Additionally, neither 2 Chronicles 20.34 nor 1 Maccabees 14.18, 26 share the Mosaic themes that John 8.6, 8 and Exodus 32.15 do. The rarity of *katagra, fw* in the NT, combined with the paralleled usage of the compound and the simple verbs—with the compound preceding—provides strong linguistic warrant for viewing John 8.6, 8 as an allusion to Exodus 32.15. Once this is granted, it is more plausible that Jesus' usage of his 'finger' to write in John 8.6 is also an allusion to Exodus 31.18.

The next three indices are interrelated and thus overlap. The fourth index for detecting an allusion is somewhat ambiguous and complicated to apply to PA's situation. Allison states, 'The probability that one text intentionally recalls another is increased if the latter is prominent in the tradition of the former, and especially if it is cited or alluded to in other related texts.'³³ The problem with applying this criterion to John 8.6, 8/Exodus 32.15 is identifying exactly what 'tradition' PA belongs to, and further not knowing whether Jesus' acts of writing were part of the initial tradition or added later. As far as PA's insertion into GJohn is concerned, however, this criterion affirms the allusion. For in GJohn, Jesus' relationship with Moses is an ubiquitous theme, and I will return to this below.

Allison's fifth index claims that an allusion is more likely 'if a suggested intertext belongs to a source that the author otherwise shows interest in.'³⁴ Apart from GJohn, PA itself shows interest in Mosaic connections. John 8.5 refers to the

³¹ Allison, *Intertextual Jesus*, 11.

³² In Exodus 32.15, both verbs refer to the writing on the stone tablets. In 2 Chronicles 20.34, *gra, fw* refers to the writing of one text while *katagra, fw* refers to the re-writing of that text in another text. In 1 Maccabees 14.18, *gra, fw* is used to reference the Romans writing a message on bronze tablets while, in 14.26, *katagra, fw* is used to reference the Jewish response whereby they wrote on bronze tablets of their own.

³³ Allison, *Intertextual Jesus*, 12.

³⁴ Allison, *Intertextual Jesus*, 12.

Mosaic punishment for adultery in passages such as Leviticus 20.10, Deuteronomy 22.21–24 (cf. Ezekiel 16.40) while John 8.7 likely refers to the Mosaic instructions on carrying out stoning found in Deuteronomy 13.9/17.7. One receives another reference to this passage if the presence of ‘all the people’ in John 8.2 also reflects these instructions. Exodus itself appears with the reference to Jesus’ finger in John 8.6, which I have suggested is in conjunction with the Exodus 32.15 allusion in 8.6, 8. Once one reads PA in its Johannine context, as the interpolator intended his audience to read it, Allison’s fifth index affirms the allusion to Exodus 32.15 further. As one example beyond those already discussed, in John 9.28–29, the Jewish leadership identifies itself as followers of Moses over against Jesus: ‘We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from’ (NRSV). Exodus and Moses provide sustained narrative backgrounds for GJohn.

Finally, Allison’s sixth index for detecting an allusion is that the probability of an allusion is enhanced if such an allusion would strengthen one of the main points of the text.³⁵ The Jesus of PA is a superior interpreter and teacher, whose literacy indicates his parallel status to God-as-author. The contribution of this grapho-literate Jesus to broader Johannine themes will be discussed below, but suffice for now to say that PA’s image of Jesus not only shares a similar interest in Moses and Mosaic Law (Allison’s fifth index), but does so in order to make the same point as GJohn (Allison’s sixth index), namely to emphasize Jesus’ superiority to Moses and Torah.³⁶ This criterion thus also affirms that John 8.6, 8 is an allusion to Exodus 32.15.

Therefore, the grammar, structure, themes, context in, and contribution to GJohn and its arguments all favour seeing John 8.6, 8 as an allusion to God’s authorship of the Decalogue in Exodus 31.18 and 32.15–16. The allusion is additionally supported by a long interpretive history of viewing Jesus’ writing in terms of God’s authorship of the Decalogue and his own heavenly ‘book.’ In light of

³⁵ Allison, *Intertextual Jesus*, 13.

³⁶ Portraying Jesus as a text-broker superior to Moses is perhaps not unique to PA in the NT. Hebrews 12 contrasts the Sinai experience of Moses with the Zion experience of believers (12.18–24), with the author clearly considering the latter superior. In this context, at 12.24, Jesus is said to be the ‘mediator of a new covenant’ (12.24). For Moses as the mediator/text-broker, see above p.172. Cf. also Hebrews 10.7, which likely reflects the tradition regarding God’s heavenly book, though via Psalm 40.

such evidence, to argue against the interpretation proposed here and below, one would need to provide a more plausible explanation not just for the vocabulary used in the description of Jesus' writing, but also for the particular syntactical arrangement of that vocabulary.

Before proceeding to an interpretation of this allusion, I must address the possibility of other allusions in John 8.6. A number of scholars find significance in the fact that Jesus wrote 'in the ground' (ειν j th.n gh/n). Minear connects this with the curse 'from the ground' (avpo th/j gh/j) in Genesis 4.11.³⁷ Ambrose connects it to Jeremiah 22.29–30, which instructs the 'ground' (gh/) to hear the word of the Lord and write (gra, yon) that certain men have been disowned.³⁸ A host of scholars, both ancient and modern, connect the ground reference to Jeremiah 17.13, which says that sinners are written (graph, twsan) 'upon the ground' (evpi. th/j gh/j).³⁹ In favour of these proposals is the respective texts' usage of gh/ and that they all share with PA a context of judgment, along with the fact that the latter two also contain references to writing. The difficulty, however, is in raising one of these texts from a possible background to a plausible background. First, according to Allison's third index for identifying an allusion, similar vocabulary is only significant when the vocabulary is uncommon. In this light, these proposals demonstrate not necessarily that John 8.6, 8 is an allusion to a LXX passage, but rather that a number of LXX passages use gh/ in a context of judgment (and writing). They are all equally likely in this regard because they are all mainly based upon similar vocabulary with John 8.6, 8. Second, the prepositional modifiers before gh/ and/or occurrence of gra, fw do not help to suggest one possible background over the others. Those LXX texts that see the ground as the object of the writing apply a different preposition from John 8.6, 8's ειν j. Jeremiah 22.29–30 actually sees the ground as the active subject of the writing. The references to writing in Jeremiah 22.29–30 and 17.13 may make them more likely candidates than Genesis 4.10–12, but they do not help in identifying which between them is more likely. Likewise, the fact that the ground does the

³⁷ Minear, 'Writing,' 29.

³⁸ Ambrose, *Epistle* 50 (25).

³⁹ Ambrose, *Epistle* 68 (26); Augustine, *Cons.* 4.10.17; *Leg* 1.44; Jerome, *Pelag.* 2.17; R. Eisler, 'Jesus,' 306–7; Jeremias, *Parables*, 228; McDonald, 'So-Called,' 421; Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to St. John*, 2.166.

writing rather than being written upon in Jeremiah 22.29–30 may suggest that the other two are more likely, but again does not help one decide between them. Third, the ground as the writing location may simply be related to the interpolator’s desire to stress Jesus’ use of the finger. Where else would Jesus write with a digit but in the ground?

Though it may be possible that the reference to the ground in John 8.6, 8 is an allusion to one or several of these other LXX texts, one cannot affirm any more than the possibility. In light of the previous discussion, however, Exodus 32.15 is the primary text to which Jesus’ writing alludes. Likewise, Exodus 31.18 is the primary text to which his use of the finger alludes. Now the present discussion turns to consider exactly what this allusion *means* to PA’s interpolator and readers.

1.2.2 Jesus’ Equivalent Access to the Mosaic Law

For PA’s interpolator, Jesus’ writing in John 8.6, 8 has a double referent—it simultaneously demonstrates that his level of access to the Mosaic Law is equivalent to that of the most educated of his interlocutors in John 8.3 *and* that his level of access is superior even to that of Moses. The interpolator’s portrayal of Jesus’ equivalent level of access is here considered first.

In John 7.15, the Jewish leadership, or the temple police (cf. 7.45), are amazed at Jesus’ teaching. Their amazement is not general, however, but rather specific—they are amazed because he appears to ‘know letters’ when ‘he has never been taught.’ Acknowledging their surprise, Jesus immediately responds by stating that his teaching is not his (7.16). This much the Jewish leadership would agree with, but for different reasons. For, as 7.47–52 makes explicit, in their minds the fact that Jesus is a Galilean renders impossible his identity as a powerful teacher or prophet. They are certain that powerful teachers are not associated with that region of Palestine, presumably due to limited educational opportunity. They are uncertain, therefore, as to how Jesus could have acquired such skills. Only the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders speak ‘thus’ (οὕτως; 7.46) because they ‘know the law,’ contrary to the crowd (7.49), especially a Galilean (7.52).

In this light, it is critical to note two things regarding Jesus’ opponents in PA. First, they are not simply the Pharisee-led conglomerate from the end of John 7, but rather have received an addition—the scribes (οἱ γραμματεῖς). As argued in Chapter Four, scribes held the prestigious position within Jewish society of being

responsible for copying the holy texts, and were assumed to have a higher level of access to that text, which led to interpretive authority. The presence of scribes immediately upgraded the ‘Torah-authority’ of a group—it buttressed the group’s socially-acknowledged position as authoritative text-brokers.

Second, scribes somehow ‘fit’ PA in a manner in which they do not ‘fit’ the rest of GJohn. Where the Johannine narrator was in control, scribes are absent. Later, however, an interpolator presented the scribes as a new character in the Johannine story when he inserted PA. The most likely explanation for why scribes appear as part of Jesus’ opponents in PA (again, as argued in Chapter Four) is that they are intended as the direct counter-examples to Jesus’ own grapho-literacy portrayed in the story.

By inserting PA at John 7.53–8.11, then, the interpolator responds to the accusations underlying John 7.15 and 7.52. Contrary to expectations, Jesus, a presumed *Galilean*, can not only evince the signs of an educated Torah teacher, he can evince the signs of the *most* educated Torah teachers. Jesus’ access to the Mosaic Law is therefore, in the least, equivalent to the most authoritative of his interlocutors. Goodspeed was correct when he said, ‘[PA] was probably introduced into John at this point (7:53) to show that Jesus knew how to write, a thing the Jews had questioned his ability to do in 7:15,’ and further speculated that a Christian ‘scribe evidently thought this story would supply a good answer to that slur upon his Master.’⁴⁰ Likewise, though not referencing John 7.15, Bengel sees Jesus’ writing as a response to the scribes: ‘Ye, Scribes, write judgments against others; I also can write against you.’⁴¹ What Goodspeed ignored and Bengel did not, however, was that Jesus’ acts of writing contained a further meaning.

1.2.3 Jesus’ Superior Access to the Mosaic Law

Had the interpolator’s sole point been to state that Jesus was capable of grapho-literacy and thus was authoritative an interpreter as ‘the scribes and the Pharisees,’ he could have accomplished this by making a single reference to it. However, he did not do this. As Minear rightly observes,

Because these actions twice interrupt the flow of the debate, unnecessarily separating answers from questions, interpreters must ask

⁴⁰ Goodspeed, *Problems*, 108; see also p.104. Likewise, Goodspeed, *History*, 70.

⁴¹ Bengel, *Gnomon*, 2.350. See footnote 44 below.

why the narrator took listeners . . . through such a gratuitous detour unless there was a desire to call attention to deeper meanings in the double gesture.⁴²

Minear views the deeper meaning as ‘a removal of the primal and a return to the first light of creation.’⁴³ I must here disagree with him and instead draw attention to the fact that the interpolator chose to describe Jesus’ writing in the language of Exodus 32.15 (and 31.18). By describing the writing in the language of Exodus 32.15, and stating that Jesus uses his finger, in reference to Exodus 31.18, the interpolator portrays Jesus not as a copier of Torah who has internalized God’s laws in the process of writing them, *but rather as the author of the Decalogue, from whom the laws derive in the first place.*

Therefore, when Jesus gives his ‘interpretation’ of Moses’ required punishment of the adulteress in John 8.7, he does so in his authorial power as author of the Decalogue. His words are surrounded on both sides by divine writing, just as the stone tablets of the Decalogue were. Jesus’ assessment of the adulteress’ situation is thus as much from the finger of God as the seventh commandment that made her actions a sin.⁴⁴ The point of the narrative is not only that Jesus ‘beats them at their own game’ by creating a further qualification that renders the enactment of the stoning impossible and therefore wins the interpretive showdown. More importantly, in the interpolator’s presentation of this victory, Jesus wins in such a fashion to show the reader the supreme irony in the challenge of 8.5. Jesus is asked to interpret Moses, but Jesus is shown here to be the author for whom Moses himself was only the delivery person.⁴⁵ John 8.6–8 thus evinces a high Christology indeed—Moses is *not* the final authority; Jesus *is* the final authority. Jesus’ superiority to Moses is only one of several Johannine themes that PA shares.

⁴² Minear, ‘Writing,’ 24.

⁴³ Minear, ‘Writing,’ 35. Unfortunately, Minear, like others, fails to explain adequately the presence of the second act of writing when he speculates, ‘It may have been simply in order to give the accusers, shamed by Jesus’ knowledge, time to leave the stage’ (31).

⁴⁴ Thus, Bengel, *Gnomon*, 2.350: ‘Moses wrote the law: I also can write; nay, the law of Moses was My writing.’

⁴⁵ It is not clear from the narrative if PA’s interpolator therefore means to claim that the Decalogue is no longer relevant in the light of Jesus’ life and ministry. When set in GJohn, this interpretation is unlikely; for here Moses and the Mosaic Law are not themselves the problems. The problem is rather when these cultural icons prohibit acknowledgment of Jesus’ true identity.

2. Further Resonances Between PA and GJohn

There are at least four resonances between PA and GJohn, which attest to PA's essential congruity with the broader story of Jesus in that gospel: Jesus' superiority to Moses; double meanings; Jesus as judge/d; and the importance of textuality. To be clear, however, I would like to state explicitly that these Johannine resonances are not evidence that PA was originally Johannine material and should not be construed as such.⁴⁶ They are, however, evidence that PA's interpolator inserted a pericope that is sensitive to its narrative context and contributes to that context by highlighting and heightening a number of its themes. They are thus also evidence that the idea that 'there is a complete want of harmony between the spirit of this story and that of the entire Johannine narrative' is entirely incorrect.⁴⁷ That is, these shared *topoi* demonstrate further that PA's interpolator did not choose a gospel location at random and force his pericope into that narrative in a manner that caused the insertion to stand at odds with the rest of the text. Some of these resonances have already been presented in this chapter, but deserve to be singled out here as well.

2.1 Jesus' Superiority to Moses

As aforementioned, one clear similarity between the image of Jesus in PA and the Johannine Jesus is Jesus' superiority to Moses.⁴⁸ According to Glasson, the thought behind the contrast of Jesus and Moses in John 1.17 is 'one of the recurring themes of the whole Gospel.'⁴⁹ Dennis offers more precision for this contrast in 1.17. He not only observes that the 'whole context of Exod 26–40 probably provides the backdrop to John 1.14–18' (that is, the same narrative background proposed here for John 8.6, 8) but also that,

These parallels suggest that John has portrayed Jesus not simply as a new Moses, but as someone who far exceeds Moses' mediation of the revelation of the God of Sinai. The contrast in John 1.17–18 is not between the covenant at Sinai and *h` ca,rij kai. h`*

⁴⁶ The implication, however, is that the question 'Is PA (authentically) Johannine?' is problematized, since it is clear that the interpolator would have a different answer to most modern scholars or even other ancient scribes. See further Chris Keith, 'The Adulteress' Entrance into John's Gospel: A Performance of the Text,' in *The Fourth Gospel and First-Century Media Culture* (eds. Anthony LeDonne and Tom Thatcher; ESCO; London: T & T Clark, forthcoming).

⁴⁷ Godet, *Commentary*, 644.

⁴⁸ *Contra* Harstine, *Moses*, 167, who overstates the evidence when he claims, 'This brief story is not totally consistent with the portrayal of Moses elsewhere in the gospel.'

⁴⁹ Glasson, *Moses*, 86. See also Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 288.

avlh, qeia realized through Jesus (v.17); rather, the contrast seems to be between the mediators of this revelation.⁵⁰

Previously in Chapter Six, I observed that GJohn shows Moses and the Mosaic Law to be instruments of judgment already by the time the reader reaches John 7. The narrative leaves no question as to who is the ultimate manifestation of God the Father, with Moses and his writings only anticipating the Son.⁵¹ Due to its relevance to John 8.6, 8, one example of Jesus' superiority to Moses in GJohn will be discussed here—John 6.32.

After claiming that his audience will not believe what he says because they do not believe what Moses wrote (5.47), Jesus asserts his relationship with Moses by producing the miracle of the manna from heaven anew and feeding the large crowd following him (6.1–13). The people (οἱ ἄνθρωποι) of 6.14 then acknowledge Jesus as 'the prophet' (ὁ προφήτης), but, demonstrating their complete ineptitude in light of their having just been fed, actually ask Jesus for a sign comparable to the manna (6.30–31). Jesus, knowing that their bellies are leading their brains (6.26), this time states explicitly what the crowd should have learned from his feeding miracle: 'Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven' (6.32, NRSV). According to Jesus, God provided the food, Moses only delivered it.⁵²

Pancaro, however, objects to this reading, arguing that one should not interpret John 6.32 as 'God, not Moses, gave you the bread from heaven.'⁵³ Instead, he suggests, 'What Jn does wish to say is that the bread Moses gave (God gave through Moses) is not the *true* bread from heaven, is not *the* bread from heaven which the Father *gives* and, therefore, that *the* bread the Father *gives* is *not given by Moses*.'⁵⁴ Pancaro cites three pieces of evidence in support of his reading. First, he

⁵⁰ Dennis, *Jesus' Death*, 142, 143, respectively. See also p.270, where Dennis cites John 1.17 and John 6 as evidence that Jesus is 'both like Moses and greater than Moses.'

⁵¹ Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 288: 'On the one hand, Jesus and his revelation stand over against or at least superior to the Torah. . . . On the other hand, Jesus is the one of whom "Moses wrote in the Law," . . . so that a faithful comprehension of "the Scriptures" would discover testimony to Jesus.'

⁵² Cf. Glasson, *Moses*, 45; Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 291.

⁵³ Pancaro, *Law in the Fourth Gospel*, 463. He also objects to interpreting John 6.32 as 'The bread Moses gave you was not the bread from heaven, but the bread from heaven is the bread the Father gives.'

⁵⁴ Pancaro, *Law in the Fourth Gospel*, 463 (emphases original).

states that the change of tenses between the two clauses (de, dwken to di, dwsin) militates against reading the text as if the verbs are the same in each clause; that is, as if the claim is ‘Moses *did not give* you the bread from heaven, but my Father *did give* you the bread from heaven.’ Second, Pancaro emphasizes that ‘bread’ in both clauses is arthrous, and thus a quite specific entity, ‘*the bread*,’ rather than a generalized ‘bread’ that may include manna.⁵⁵ His third point works in conjunction with his second, that the specific bread that Moses did not give is the bread that God now gives through Jesus—*the, true*, bread. To reiterate his earlier quotation, according to Pancaro the contrast in John 6.32 is between what God *did* through Moses and what God *is doing* through Jesus; since God is only giving *the true* bread through Jesus, it cannot be said to have been given through Moses.

Pancaro’s objection and suggested interpretation raise important issues in the text, but are ultimately unpersuasive. First, though he is correct that the change in verbal tenses between the two clauses implies a difference between what God *did* and what he *is doing*,⁵⁶ Pancaro is wrong to assert that a further contrast between God and Moses is absent. Whatever the perspective of the Johannine narrator himself, he has certainly portrayed the crowd to whom Jesus is speaking in 6.32 (see 6.22) as thinking that what their ancestors received in the wilderness in the form of manna was ‘the bread from heaven’ and that Moses was in some way responsible for this miracle. Indeed, Jesus’ (and the narrator’s) point fails unless his audience does carry this assumption. Jesus contradicts this very sentiment, and it is significant that the negation in this clause is placed emphatically prior to Mwū?sh/j. Jesus’ statement in 6.32a is a clarification that the un-stated subject of the third singular e; dwken in the crowd’s Scripture quotation in 6.31 is God and not Moses. Pancaro instead sees the opposition in terms of the object of the giving, namely teaching/revelation: ‘The opposition at Jn 6,32f is between the teaching (revelation) God *gives* in and through Jesus and the teaching (revelation) he *gave* through Moses.’⁵⁷ However, though Pancaro draws attention to the different verbs, he fails to acknowledge that the subjects also change, and here the contrast between the subjects of the giving, Moses and God, is explicit: *Moses* did not give; *God* gives. Thus, the

⁵⁵ Pancaro, *Law in the Fourth Gospel*, 463.

⁵⁶ Likewise, Dennis, *Jesus’ Death*, 191.

⁵⁷ Pancaro, *Law in the Fourth Gospel*, 469.

primary contrast in 6.32 is not between what God did and what he is doing, but between what Moses did not do and what God is doing. Obviously, the implication is that if Moses did not give the bread from heaven, God did. However, one must ask here why the author does not portray Jesus as saying, ‘God did not give you the bread from heaven through Moses, but he is giving you the true bread from heaven through me.’ That is, why go to the trouble of mentioning Moses’ non-action and making him the subject of the first clause if that is not part of the point? Clearly, however, the further implication of John 6.32 is that even what God *gave* is not comparable to what God is now *giving*, and this leads to Pancaro’s second and third points. Second, given the crowd’s assumptions regarding *the* bread from heaven (that it was the manna), and the emphatic placement of the negation, Pancaro’s appeal to the arthrous ‘bread’ is insignificant. The point of 6.32 is not that ‘Moses did not give *the* bread from heaven,’ but that ‘Moses did *not* give the bread from heaven.’ Pancaro is on safer ground for noting the contrast between the respective activities of God with his third piece of evidence. Here he focuses appropriately upon the fact that the latter giving was ‘the *true* bread from heaven,’ as opposed to the former, which can only be categorized as (therefore) not ‘the *true* bread from heaven.’ In summary, then, one should understand John 6.32 to contain two contrasts—one found in the different subjects between the two clauses; one found in the difference between the verbs with regard to ‘true’ and ‘untrue’ bread. The first contrast is between God and Moses: Moses did not give (by implication God did give). The second is between what God gave then and what he gives now: God gave the bread from heaven (manna); God gives the true bread from heaven (Jesus).⁵⁸

Though this protracted discussion of Pancaro’s objection suffices to demonstrate that he is mistaken to see the contrast in John 6.32 solely between what God did through Moses and what God did through Jesus, one more point must be mentioned, which is perhaps most damaging to Pancaro’s argument. In conjunction with the fact that Pancaro fails to see the importance of the contrast not just between God’s former and present actions, but more specifically between Moses’ former non-actions and God’s present actions, he denies the degree to which this narrative parallels God and Jesus, and thus portrays Jesus as superior to Moses. That is, such a framework denies the degree to which Jesus acts as active agent in John 6 and the

⁵⁸ This conclusion is reached independently of Dennis, *Jesus’ Death*, 191.

rest of the gospel. Jesus *himself* performs the new manna miracle in 6.11, contrary to Moses who did not perform the manna miracle. Likewise, though the Father has ‘set his seal’ on the Son of Man in 6.27, it is the *latter* who actually gives ‘the food that is for eternal life.’ Prior to the text under discussion (6.32), the crowd asks Jesus what sign *he* will give them. Though the wills of the Son and the Father are one (6.38), Jesus claims that *he himself* will raise up those who believe in him (6.41). The crucial point here is that John 6 does not present Jesus solely as a medium through whom God acts; the narrative does not contrast him simply with Moses as a medium for God’s actions.⁵⁹ The conviction of the Johannine narrator is that one should identify what God is doing through Jesus directly by what Jesus is doing, because one should identify Jesus with, or in terms of, God. Moses is revered because God worked through him, but Jesus is to be revered because he is God working.⁶⁰ Thus, *pace* Pancaro, when Jesus says in John 6.32 that Moses did not give the bread of heaven, he underscores the fact that his actions resemble the provision of the Father, not the medium Moses.

In this light, there could not be a more explicit parallel to PA (with regards to Jesus’ relationship with Moses) than John 6.32. In both texts, a group approaches Jesus and asks him to compare himself to Moses. In both texts, Jesus demonstrates that he is not to be compared with Moses the deliverer, but rather with God the provider, whether bread or the Decalogue is the object of provision/delivery. The essential congruity between these passages and their portrayals of Jesus is underscored all the more if readers should understand Jesus’ claim to be the ‘bread of life’ in John 6.35 in light of the Jewish conviction that Torah was the true manna.⁶¹

Given this agreement between PA and GJohn, one must note Meek’s omission of it in his study of GJohn’s usage of Moses traditions in its Christology. Granted, his focus is GJohn itself and not later additions like PA. But he observes both that, ‘In each passage which mentions the Law or Scripture of Moses, the Fourth Gospel indicates a direct relationship between that Law and Jesus,’ and that,

⁵⁹ Dennis, *Jesus’ Death*, 191, misses this nuance.

⁶⁰ This is not to claim that the Johannine narrator collapses the distinction between God as Father and Jesus as Son. He clearly maintains this distinction, but does so alongside his efforts to identify Jesus with God.

⁶¹ *Inter alia*, see Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 336–7; Pancaro, *Law in the Fourth Gospel*, 468–9.

‘Most significant of all is the way in which the “words” of Jesus are made functionally parallel to Scripture’!⁶² Meeks even calls attention to how Jesus’ language regarding the words the Father gives to Jesus in John 17.8 is ‘almost identical’ to the Pentateuch’s language used ‘to describe the fundamental element of Moses’ mission: the transmission of the Torah on Sinai.’⁶³ Altogether absent from Meeks’ discussion, however, is any comment about PA and how it contributes to these Johannine emphases.

The perplexing thoughts of Glasson are another example of a scholar failing to recognize PA’s congruity with GJohn’s presentation of Jesus vis-à-vis Moses. Without evincing knowledge of any of the linguistic connections between PA and Exodus 32.15 noted earlier, he comes very near to the conclusion of this chapter while also backing away from it. Viewing PA as a ‘perfect illustration’ of the contrast between Jesus and Torah/Moses, he insightfully asks, ‘Can it be that the scribe who erroneously inserted this story here . . . was aware how well it illustrated one of the dominant themes of this Gospel?’⁶⁴ The present argument responds with an emphatic ‘yes’—the scribe was indeed aware of this connection. The further implication of that conclusion, however, is that Glasson is entirely wrong then to describe the actions of a scribe who was this attentive as ‘erroneous.’⁶⁵

2.2 Double Meanings

A second shared theme between PA and GJohn is the presence and use of double meanings or double entendres. In PA, Jesus’ writing asserts his scribal literacy and authority as a teacher on one level and, on a second level, demonstrates that his literacy is actually parallel to the literacy of God. Double meanings are a familiar tactic of the Johannine narrator in his depiction of the characters’ inability to grasp Jesus’ true identity.⁶⁶ A few examples will suffice here. In John 2.19, a double meaning is assigned to ‘temple’ so that it references not the tearing down of the temple itself, but the destruction of Jesus’ body (2.21). Similarly, in 3.14 as well

⁶² Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 288, 289, respectively.

⁶³ Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 290.

⁶⁴ Glasson, *Moses*, 91.

⁶⁵ Similarly, Taylor, *Formation*, 83, is incorrect to attribute PA’s inclusion to ‘the accidents of textual transmission.’

⁶⁶ Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1.709; Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 83; Neyrey, ‘Trials and Tribulations,’ 112.

as 8.28, ‘lifting up’ Jesus refers both to his glorification and his being ‘lifted up’ on a cross. In John 4.13–14, Jesus imbues ‘water’ and ‘thirst’ with second meanings in his conversation with the Samaritan woman. Both John 7.33–36 and 8.21–23 picture Jesus and his Jewish opponents appropriating two different meanings for where Jesus is ‘going.’⁶⁷ Both Caiaphas and the Johannine narrator agree that Jesus must die for the nation in 11.50–52, but for different reasons.⁶⁸ More examples could be cited, but it is enough presently to observe that, at times, the Johannine narrator employs the device of double reference in order to show how characters in the narrative assign one meaning to a word or action while Jesus and/or the narrator assign another meaning to it. As Keener observes, ‘Throughout the Fourth Gospel, Jesus utters words on a deeper level of meaning, words that can be misconstrued.’⁶⁹ Since the characters ‘know’ something—as Caiaphas ‘knows’ that Jesus must die and the Jewish leadership ‘knows’ that a prophet cannot come from Galilee—they fail to know the reality behind the initial impression. This is also the case in PA, where John 8.6, 8 responds simultaneously to the accusations that Jesus was illiterate and shows that he is in fact ‘divinely’ literate. Since they know Jesus is illiterate, the scribes and the Pharisees do not know that he interprets the Mosaic Law not as its reader, but as its author.

One should observe that there is technically a difference between PA and other examples of Johannine double reference, however. If PA is demonstrating, as Goodspeed proposed and this study affirms, that Jesus is in fact literate contrary to John 7.15, then the interpolator is making a point to demonstrate the falsity of the Jews’ initial impression of Jesus. That is, the interpolator is saying, ‘Not only is your initial observation incorrect, but you are also missing the further implications.’ In contrast, the Johannine narrator asserts only that there is a second meaning to Jesus’ words or actions, without stating that a character’s initial impression is incorrect. So, for example, the Jews of 2.20 were correct to misunderstand Jesus as referencing the temple, since, according to 2.22, the clarification of Jesus’ words came only after the resurrection. That is, in contrast to PA’s interpolator, the Johannine narrator’s usage of double reference in these examples says, ‘Your initial observation is *correct*, but

⁶⁷ Loader, *Christology*, 47, describes this use of irony as a ‘double focus.’ See also Barrett, *Gospel According to St. John*, 325, who describes the deliberate ambiguity as ‘in John’s manner.’

⁶⁸ On this passage, see recently Dennis, *Jesus’ Death*.

⁶⁹ Keener, *Gospel of John*, 709.

you are missing the further implications.’ PA’s interpolator thus uses double reference, as does the Johannine narrator, but the interpolator employs it with a slight nuance. This is perhaps further evidence that PA’s interpolator knew enough about GJohn to reflect some of its elements, but held to his own purposes enough to reflect those elements with a degree of difference.

2.3 *Jesus and the Johannine Trial*

As many scholars observe, the entirety of GJohn employs a trial motif.⁷⁰ I have already discussed Jesus’ role as both judge and judged in GJohn, particularly in relation to Jesus’ status vis-à-vis Moses, and I pause here to make explicit how PA contributes to this theme.

As mentioned previously, John 3.17–19 presents Jesus as the criterion of God’s judgment upon the world; one’s judgment *of* Jesus determines one’s judgment *by* the Father. This is an important theme in the narrative both before and after PA. In John 7.24, Jesus challenges the Jews, ‘Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment’ (NRSV). Nicodemus challenges later, and just before PA, that the Jewish leadership’s judgment *of* Jesus is not ‘right judgment,’ even by their own standards (7.50).⁷¹ After PA, in 8.15, Jesus states explicitly that their standards are improper and that he does not judge. He then immediately claims that if he does judge, he does so correctly by meeting the Mosaic requirement of two witnesses—himself and the Father (8.16–18). Again, what is at first sight confusing is explicable because Jesus is the criterion of judgment; though he does not actively judge himself, God’s judgment occurs via him.

Both John 7 and 8, then, as well as the rest of GJohn, link the theme of judgment with Mosaic requirements (7.50; 8.16). In the middle of these two particular chapters, Jesus is asked to *judge* the adulteress based on *Mosaic* requirements for such a sinner, in what is clearly an attempt on the Jewish leadership’s part to *judge* Jesus. Ultimately, he fails to do the very thing sought of him and says to the adulteress, ‘Neither do I condemn you’ (John 8.11). Jesus’ non-condemnation in PA is thoroughly in keeping with the broader Johannine picture of

⁷⁰ See Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 239; A. E. Harvey, *Jesus on Trial: A Study in the Fourth Gospel* (London: SPCK, 1976); Lincoln, *Truth on Trial*; Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 305–6; Jerome H. Neyrey, ‘Jesus the Judge: Forensic Process in John 8,21–59,’ *Bib* 68 (1987): 509–42; Neyrey, ‘Trials and Tribulations.’

⁷¹ See Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1.734.

Jesus as judge. Jesus does not judge the adulteress because in fact he cannot. Once placed in the Johannine narrative, the adulteress can only be judged based upon her response to Jesus. Since a response from the adulteress is not narrated, neither is her judgment. Neyrey draws explicit attention to the Johannine portrait of Jesus as simultaneously judge and judged in separate articles on John 7 and 8, but at no point comments on PA, which displays exactly the Jesus that Neyrey notes (although his focus is GJohn itself and not PA).⁷² Neyrey continues to ignore PA's congruity with the judicial aspects of John 7 and 8 in his 2006 commentary on GJohn, despite noting that in John 8 'the forensic proceedings that structured the narrative in John 7 continue' and labelling PA 'A Judicious Judgment.'⁷³ Contrary to Neyrey's silence, one must here observe that the (non-)judgment of the Jesus of John 8.11 exhibits perfectly in praxis the judicial Christological programme announced by the Jesus of John 3.17 and carried out in the rest of GJohn.

2.4 The Importance of Textuality

In a 2004 article, Aichele observes rightly, 'The Gospel of John is one of the most evidently logocentric texts ever written.'⁷⁴ Not only does GJohn identify Jesus as the divine Logos, but in its canonical form it contains a number of passages that emphasize the importance of writing and written texts. That these passages are unique to GJohn confirms that it is a particular theme of its author. I have already covered the interest in Jesus' apparent knowledge of letters at John 7.15, an otherwise unattested tradition, and thus begin here with John 19.19–22.

⁷² For John 7, see Neyrey, 'Trials and Tribulations,' throughout, esp. 110. For John 8, see Neyrey, 'Jesus the Judge,' throughout, esp. 515. Even further, on 'Trials and Tribulations,' 123, Neyrey states, 'And he [the author] portrays Jesus as a fully honorable person, both in terms of ascribed honor (origins/birth, education, authorization) and in terms of his ability to claim and defend his honor.' Surely the fact that PA's interpolator chooses to display Jesus defending his honor in terms of grapho-literacy, after being challenged to an interpretive dual, immediately after John 7 where, as Neyrey recognizes, Jesus' birth, education, and authority are all questioned, is no coincidence. Neyrey ignores this, however. Similarly, on 'Jesus the Judge,' 540, Neyrey notes that a fuller discussion of John 8 would include how Jesus is portrayed as 'equal to God' in his exercise of judgment, but ignores PA's claim that Jesus' role as judge is backed by his equality with the divine author of the Decalogue.

⁷³ Neyrey, *Gospel of John*, 153, 151, respectively.

⁷⁴ Aichele, 'Reading,' 353.

2.4.1 *The Crucifixion Inscription (John 19.19–22)*

The discussion of the inscription that hangs over Jesus while he is on the cross contains several elements that are unique to the Johannine version of that story. Matthew 27.37//Mark 15.26//Luke 23.38 refer only to the content of the charge against Jesus that was placed over him. In contrast, John 19.19–22 contains five additional pieces of information. First, 19.19 states Pilate’s responsibility for having the plaque made. Second, 19.19 identifies Jesus as ‘of Nazareth’ (Matthew 27.37 contains Jesus’ name, while Mark 15.26//Luke 23.38 only reads ‘King of the Jews’). Third, and very interesting, 19.20 tells the reader that the inscription was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. Fourth, 19.21 records the complaint of the chief priests that the inscription “King of the Jews” is incorrect. According to the Johannine narrator, who undoubtedly sees the inscription as correct, the chief priests did not want Jesus identified *as* the King of the Jews, but as a claimant. Fifth, 19.22 contains Pilate’s response, which emphasizes the permanency of ‘that which is written’: ‘Pilate answered, “What I have written I have written”’(NRSV). The thread connecting these five uniquely Johannine contributions to the crucifixion story is the text above Jesus, as all centre on who wrote it or what was written.

2.4.2 *‘Written that You May Believe’ (John 20.30)*

Another example of Johannine emphasis on written material typically receives more attention than the example of the crucifixion inscription. In John 20.30–31, the narrator tells his readers that Jesus did many other things in his ministry that are not written (gegramme, na) ‘in this book’ (evn tw/| bibli, w| tou, tw|). What has been written, however, is intended to encourage faith. This statement underscores the importance of what *is* included in the text as sufficient. Outside of Johannine tradition, perhaps only in the Lukan prologue is there another example of a gospel text calling attention to its own context in this manner. Within Johannine tradition, however, John 21.25 recapitulates this idea.

2.4.3 *‘The Books’ that Exceed the Cosmos (John 21.25)*

Similarly to John 20.30, 21.25 calls attention to the author’s knowledge that Jesus did things that are not recorded in the text.⁷⁵ The emphasis in 21.25, however,

⁷⁵ I cannot here engage the debate regarding whether John 21 is an added appendix to GJohn. See most recently, however, Bauckham, *Jesus*, 364–9.

is upon the vast amount of activities of Jesus not recorded in the gospel: ‘If every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written’ (NRSV). Thus, the deeds of Jesus’ ministry exceed the ability of a single text, or even every text, to contain them. For present purposes, the important point with regards to John 20.30 and 21.25 is that writing and literary culture are key to the author’s point.

When one moves outside the Johannine gospel and into the epistles and Apocalypse, one finds a similar interest in writing, as discussed in the analysis of *grapho* in Chapter Two. Johannine tradition as a whole, then, highlights the importance of textuality in a manner that is missing in the Synoptic gospels and other NT texts.⁷⁶ In this manner, there is no more proper context for placing an image of a grapho-literate Jesus in (what would become) the NT than GJohn.

3. *Summary and Conclusion*

As Chapter Five concluded, it is overwhelmingly likely that John 7.53–8.11 was PA’s first Johannine and canonical location, and that the interpolator intended the story to contribute to the Johannine narrative in that position. Chapter Six proceeded to analyze what in John 7 (and John 8 briefly) the interpolator could have noticed that made John 7.53–8.11 an especially appropriate location for inserting PA. I observed that, in John 7, as elsewhere in GJohn, Jesus’ educational qualifications and Galilean origins intersect with both the crowds’ and the Jewish leadership’s attempts to identify Jesus. Moses and the Mosaic Law play a crucial role for both groups, and the Jewish leadership especially attempts to set its knowledge of the law over and against the crowds’ in the Pharisaic dismissal of Jesus’ purportedly authoritative teaching. The leadership’s ‘judgment’ of Jesus is then questioned by Nicodemus, as it had been by Jesus earlier, and for this Nicodemus is rebuked for apparently not knowing the scriptures.

PA’s interpolator inserted the story of Jesus and the adulteress into this immediate context, and Chapter Seven and the present chapter focused on PA itself. In PA, Jesus is challenged to an interpretive battle and poised against Moses himself.

⁷⁶ In particular, see Philip F. Esler, ‘Collective Memory and Hebrews 11: Outlining a New Investigative Framework,’ in *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity* (eds. Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher; SemSt 52; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 164–6, who demonstrates that Hebrews’ author attempts ‘to *detextualize* the main body of tradition with which he is interacting’ (164; emphasis original).

In response, he not only out-interprets (without technically offering an interpretation) the Jewish leadership, now including the scribes, but does so with a response that includes the act of writing. The interpolator thus provides a direct response to the accusation of John 7.15 that Jesus did not ‘know letters.’ Even further, however, the interpolator’s description of the event, which borrows language from Exodus 32.15 and 31.18, asserts that Jesus’ ‘interpretation’ of Moses is buttressed by supreme access to the Decalogue. This image of Jesus expresses the interpolator’s conviction that Jesus is superior to Moses and the Mosaic Law, a conviction he shares with the author of GJohn. Also similar to the Johannine author, the interpolator sees Jesus therefore as the only person worthy of judging the adulteress. Jesus refuses to do so, however, in keeping with the Johannine portrait of Jesus as non-judge-yet-true-judge.

The similarities between PA and GJohn are not limited to the themes of Jesus’ superiority to Moses and role as judge, however. The writing of Jesus in John 8.6, 8 contains a double meaning, a technique that GJohn similarly employs. PA’s portrait of Jesus as grapho-literate also resonates with several passages unique to GJohn that show a developed interest in textuality and literary culture.

The conclusion of the present chapter is therefore that one should interpret John 8.6, 8 not only as a claim for Jesus as grapho-literate, but as an allusion to God’s authorship of the Decalogue in Exodus 32.15 and 31.18. To question how Jesus responds to Moses, as do the scribes and Pharisees of John 8.5, is thus ridiculous for PA’s interpolator. Jesus does not interpret Moses, Moses interprets Jesus; Moses is not the scribe and text-broker *par excellence*, Jesus is.⁷⁷

However, had the interpolator’s only reason for inserting PA into GJohn been to emphasize Jesus’ superiority to Moses, it is difficult to explain exactly what he thought he was adding to the canonical portrait of Jesus. For, as already observed numerous times in this study, Jesus’ superiority to Moses is a well-established theme in GJohn, quite independently of John 8.6, 8. When considering the impetus for the interpolator’s insertion of PA, then, one is forced to focus not upon similarities to GJohn, or even the Synoptics, but rather upon what PA adds that is elsewhere absent. And the one thing PA includes that no other Jesus tradition does is a grapho-literate

⁷⁷ In this light, Harstine, *Moses*, 167n.9, is mistaken when he claims, ‘This pericopae [sic] does not cohere to the main plot of the gospel, namely the acceptance/rejection of the identity of Jesus.’ To the contrary, it coheres with this theme with surprising precision for a piece of tradition that was not originally part of GJohn.

Jesus. In what socio-historical context would an interpolator find a Jesus capable of writing to be a necessary augmentation to the scriptural image of Jesus? This is the topic of the final chapter.

Chapter Nine

The Historical Context for the Insertion of the *Pericope Adulterae* into the Gospel of John: A Proposal

*'Scribes' changes were not random, but marked by the constraints and pressures of their context.'*¹

*'As Christianity emerged from the shadow of the synagogue, it became increasingly visible to the rest of Greco-Roman society, which in general was not impressed with what it saw.'*²

The previous chapters of this thesis have demonstrated the validity of a new reading of PA, one that highlights John 8.6, 8 as a claim for a (divinely) grapho-literate Jesus. As part of that task, it has also demonstrated that the interpolator considered John 7.53–8.11 a particularly appropriate textual location for PA based on issues concerning Jesus' identity and educational status in John 7 (and 8). The task of this final chapter is to consider the *Sitz im Leben der Kirche* that prompted the interpolator to insert PA into GJohn. I must stress here that the available evidence prohibits a definitive conclusion, and thus what I offer is a proposed context for PA's insertion that is more plausible than alternative explanations. I will suggest that the context for PA's insertion into GJohn is that of second- and third-century Christian responses to pagan criticisms of Christian illiteracy. Along with other traditions concerning Jesus' intellectual capabilities, PA asserts that the teacher who was the fountainhead of the Christian movement was an educated and literate individual, indeed a *supraliterate* individual.³ This chapter will first present the relevant data that any theory of PA's insertion must account for, and then discuss previous theories

¹ Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters*, 127 (see also p.116).

² Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 10.

³ I use the term 'supraliterate' (which, so far as I am aware, is my own) to designate those traditions that view Jesus as superseding normal markers of education.

and offer criticisms. I will then propose an original alternative theory by focussing upon the unique contribution of PA to the scriptural image of Jesus (the attribution of grapho-literacy) and other Christian representations of a literate and/or supraliterate Jesus.

1. The Evidence Concerning PA's Insertion

The evidence concerning PA's insertion into GJohn falls into at least two categories: (1) evidence that PA was in GJohn (at John 7.53–8.11) by the late fourth century CE; and (2) evidence that PA circulated (earlier) in Christian communities, but does not explicitly mention a Johannine textual location. These categories are listed here and will be discussed below in a general reverse chronological order. (Chapter Five's argument that John 7.53–8.11 is the earliest manuscript location of PA presented some of this information already.)

1.1 The terminus ad quem for Johannine Insertion—380's CE

As mentioned in Chapter Five, the *terminus ad quem* for PA's insertion into GJohn is the early 380's CE, as is clear from the work of Jerome and Ambrose. Although we have no Vulgate manuscripts dating from this period, there is widespread agreement that Jerome included PA in his translation of the Vulgate (Gospels completed by 384 CE⁴) at John 7.53–8.11, and this is supported by the fact that he mentions many Greek and Latin manuscripts that have PA in GJohn at *Pelag.* 2.17. In his *Epistle* 68 (26) (385–387 CE), Ambrose refers to 'the acquittal of the woman who in the Gospel according to John was brought to Christ, accused of adultery.'⁵ Therefore, PA was definitely in GJohn by the 380's CE. Furthermore, this was not a recent development. Ambrose remarks that this version of PA is 'well known' and Jerome states that, by his time, PA could be found in numerous copies of GJohn. Thus, one must allow enough time between PA's insertion and these comments for it to become established in its traditional Johannine location. By way of review, Ambrose does not unambiguously specify *where* he reads PA in GJohn, but one can safely assume that it was at John 7.53–8.11 (as does Muncey in his reconstruction of Ambrose's NT⁶) due to the facts that Jerome⁷ and Augustine⁸

⁴ Kelly, *Jerome*, 86.

⁵ Ambrose, *Epistle* 68 (26) (Beyenka, FC). As a reminder, the CSEL enumeration is listed with PL enumeration in parentheses.

⁶ Muncey, *New Testament Text*, 46–47.

clearly read it in that location and no alternative narrative location for PA appears in the manuscript tradition until the tenth century.⁹ Though not conclusive, one can gather further supporting evidence that Ambrose read PA at John 7.53–8.11 from the fact that he and Jerome are the earliest writers to comment on Jesus’ writing in PA (John 8.6, 8). Ambrose comments upon the writing in *Epistle 68* (26), *Epistle 50* (25), *Spir.* 3.3.13–16, and *Job* 4.5.20; Jerome discusses it in *Pelag.* 2.17. No known extrabiblical version of PA mentions Jesus’ acts of writing. Ambrose and Jerome are thus the first Christian writers to demonstrate knowledge of PA in GJohn *and* to find Jesus’ writing in PA worthy of comment. These two facts provide an anchor for the current discussion, and I will return toward the close of this chapter to consider why someone such as Ambrose or Jerome was the first to comment upon Jesus’ writing in PA.¹⁰

1.2 Other and Earlier (Non-Johannine?) Citations of PA

A second fact that any theory of PA’s insertion into GJohn must account for is that PA—or a version of it—was circulating as early as the second century among Christians and not necessarily in GJohn. I will begin here with the fourth-century evidence for PA outside GJohn and move toward the second-century evidence.

1.2.1 (Non-Johannine?) Citations of PA in the Fourth Century

Some fourth-century contemporaries of Ambrose and Jerome who discuss PA do not specify that it is in GJohn and thus reveal the *possibility* that they read it

⁷ Jerome, *Pelag.* 2.17 (Gospel of John); Vulgate (John 7.53–8.11).

⁸ Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 33.2–3; *Cons.* 4.16–17.

⁹ Cf. Pseudo-Athanasius, *Synopsis Scripturæ Sacræ* (PG 28.401–2), who also knows PA at John 7.53–8.11. See discussion in Chapter Five, and recall also that MS 565 likely witnesses a placement of PA at the end of GJohn in the ninth century CE, but that this primarily attests a removal of PA rather than a true alternative narrative location; i.e., a placement in another gospel context.

¹⁰ One should note that seeking a socio-historical context for the insertion of PA is not the same as asking why Ambrose is the first to discuss the writing of Jesus in John 8.6, 8, regardless of any overlap. That Ambrose was the first, however, to find Jesus’ writing worthy of comment, will provide an anchor in two ways: (1) it sets the *terminus ad quem* for PA’s insertion; and (2) it provides a historical context for investigating why Christians found the writing of value (and thus possibly why the interpolator inserted PA). My thanks to Jennifer Wright Knust for encouraging me to clarify these issues.

elsewhere (though it is also possible that they read it in GJohn). Didymus the Blind¹¹ states that PA is ‘in certain gospels’:¹²

We find, therefore, in certain gospels (ἐν τισιν ευαγγελίοις). . . . A woman, it says, was condemned by the Jews for a sin and was being sent to be stoned in the place where that was customary to happen. The saviour, it says, when he saw her and observed that they were ready to stone her, said to those who were about to cast stones, “He who has not sinned, let him take a stone and cast it. If anyone is conscious in himself not to have sinned, let him take up a stone and smite her.” And no one dared. Since they knew in themselves and perceived that they themselves were guilty in some things, they did not dare to strike her.¹³

Pacian of Barcelona locates the story ‘in the Gospel.’¹⁴ Intriguingly, Eusebius (third–fourth century CE) states that PA is in the ‘Gospel according to the Hebrews’ (τοῦ κατὰ Ἑβραίων ευαγγέλιον), though no surviving copy of that text includes PA or anything like it.¹⁵ Eusebius notes this after stating that Papias (writing in early second century CE) mentions the story, which will be discussed shortly.¹⁶ Ambrosiaster (fourth century CE) mentions PA in his *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, but does not state where it occurred.¹⁷ Hilary of Poitiers (fourth

¹¹ At the time of writing *De viris illustribus* in the closing decades of the fourth century CE, Jerome claims that Didymus is ‘still living and is already over eighty-three years old’ (*Vir. ill.* 109; Halton, FC).

¹² Didymus the Blind, *EcclT*, 223.6–13. See Bart D. Ehrman, *Didymus the Blind and the Text of the Gospels* (SBLNTGF 1; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 145, for text. For argument in relation to PA, see Ehrman, ‘Jesus and the Adulteress,’ 24–44; Klijn, *Jewish-Christian*, 118; Dieter Lührmann, ‘Die Geschichte von einer Sünderin und andere apokryphe Jesusüberlieferungen bei Didymus von Alexandrien,’ *NovT* 37 (1990): 289–316.

¹³ Ehrman, ‘Jesus and the Adulteress,’ 25. I have modified Ehrman’s translation to include an additional sentence in Didymus’ quotation of Jesus. For an unstated reason in this article, Ehrman closes the quotation after, ‘let him take a stone and cast it.’

¹⁴ Pacian of Barcelona, *Epistle ad Sympronianum* 3.20.1 (Hanson, FC). Similarly, sixth-century Cassiodorus, *Explanation of the Psalms* 31.2.

¹⁵ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.17 (Lake, LCL). Klijn, *Jewish-Christian*, 117, 119, claims Eusebius knew *that* the story was in *Gos. Heb.* (or a Jewish-Christian gospel generally and attributed it to *Gos. Heb.*) but that Eusebius was not actually familiar with that gospel.

¹⁶ Ehrman, ‘Jesus and the Adulteress,’ 29–30, notes that the syntax of the Greek does not definitively determine whether Papias attributes PA to *Gos. Heb.* or Eusebius does, but as the main text indicates, I agree with him that the most likely reading is the latter; so also Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha* (trans. R. McL. Wilson; 2 vols.; rev. ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 1.138.

¹⁷ Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones* 102 (PL 35.2307//CSEL 50.199). Scholars gave the name ‘Ambrosiaster’ to the otherwise unknown (pseudo-Ambrosian) author of an early Latin commentary on Paul’s epistles. Further research then attributed authorship of the (pseudo-Augustinian) *Quaestiones* to the same individual. See Alexander Souter, *A Study of Ambrosiaster* (TS 7.4, 1st series;

century CE) may evince knowledge of PA in his *Commentary on Psalm 118*. Hilary uses the phrase *sine peccato* ('without sin') at 15.10 and the editors of both the *Corpus Christianorum* edition and the *Sources Chrétiennes* edition refer the reader to John 8.7.¹⁸ The latter editor refers the reader to John 8.7 also at *Commentary on Psalm 118* 8.9 when Hilary uses the phrase *sine peccato esse* ('to be without sin').¹⁹ If these are allusions to John 8.7, they raise the possibility that Hilary knew PA, and further the possibility that Hilary knew the version of PA in GJohn, but they fall far short of proving either of these possibilities. A similar case of quoting John 8.7 exists with the Pachomian *Draguet Fragment 1*, if indeed it reflects the fourth century.²⁰

1.2.2 A (Non-Johannine?) Citation of PA in the Third Century

The Syriac *Didascalia* technically belongs to the fourth century, but is discussed here as a third-century source on the assumption that the Syriac translation accurately reflects the third-century Greek text from which it derives.²¹ The *Didascalia* cites PA in a section instructing bishops on dealing with sinners:

For you do not obey our Savior and our God, to do as even He did with her who had sinned, whom the elders placed before Him, and leaving the judgement in His hands, and departed. But He, the searcher of hearts, asked her and said to her: "Have the elders condemned you, my daughter? She says to him: Nay, Lord. And He said unto her: Go, neither do I condemn you."²²

This is the earliest identifiable ancient reference to the story of Jesus and the adulteress.²³ The *Apostolic Constitutions*, a fourth-century revision of the

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905), who dates the writing of the *Quaestiones* to 366–382 CE (174) and supports a previous suggestion that the author is Decimius Hilarianus Hilarius (183).

¹⁸ Hilary of Poitiers, *Tractatus super Psalmos in Psalmum CXVIII* (ed. John Doignon with R. Demeulenaere; CCSL 61a; Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 146; *Commentaire sur le Psaume 118* (trans. and ed. Marc Milhau; 2 vols.; SC 344, 347; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1988), 2.168.

¹⁹ Hilary of Poitiers, *Commentaire*, 1.268.

²⁰ See Veilleux, trans., *Pachomian Koinonia*, 2.111 (cf. 2.3–4).

²¹ R. Hugh Connolly, introduction to *Didascalia Apostolorum* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), xviii, claims the Syriac translation possibly occurred between 300–330 CE. Arthur Vööbus, introduction to *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac I: Chapter I–X* (CSCO 402; Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1979), 28, is less certain of this dating.

²² *Didascalia* 7 [89] (Vööbus). This passage is often cited as 7.2.23, based on the versification in Connolly's 1929 translation. As a reminder, I cite the *Didascalia* with the chapter reference followed by the page number(s) in Vööbus' 1979 translation.

²³ Lührmann, 'Die Geschichte,' 310–11.

Didascalia, displays a clear literary relationship to the latter and includes a similar reference to PA.²⁴ The author(s) and/or editor(s) of these two texts cite PA as authoritative Jesus tradition, but reveal no specifics on where they read and/or heard it.

1.2.3 (Non-Johannine?) Citations of PA in the Second Century

Scholars have viewed two early Christian texts as second-century evidence of PA: *Prot. Jas.*; and Papias' *Expositions of the Sayings of the Lord*.²⁵ Petersen argues that the author of *Prot. Jas.* knew a version of PA similar to what is found in GJohn.²⁶ In support, he notes the parallel with John 8.11 in *Prot. Jas.* 16.3²⁷ ('neither do I condemn you'; οὐδε . evgw . [kata] kri, nw).²⁸ As further support of *Prot. Jas.*'s usage of GJohn, he notes the parallel of digital examination as proof of a miracle in John 20.25//*Prot. Jas.* 19.3.²⁹ Like the possible allusions to PA in Hilary of Poitiers in the fourth century, the allusions in *Prot. Jas.* raise the possibility that PA had entered into Johannine tradition by the late second century but do not provide enough information to enable a firm conclusion.³⁰ Significantly, however, Petersen's argument establishes 'the last half of the second century, if not earlier' as the earliest *possible* evidence for PA's presence in GJohn.³¹

²⁴ *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* 2.24 (trans. Irah Chase; New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1847). Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel*, 346, mistakenly refers to the *Apos. Con.* as the 'first definite allusion to the story.'

²⁵ Worth note also is a third possibility. On the recto of fragment one of Papyrus Egerton 2 (ca. 150 CE), Jesus tells a healed leper to 'Go, show yourself to the priests and make an offering for your cleansing as Moses commanded, and sin no more. . . .' (For English text, see J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993], 40.) There is no way to determine whether the command to 'sin no more' is intended to recall John 5.14 or 8.11. Hans-Josef Klauck, *Apocryphal Gospels: An Introduction* (trans. Brian McNeil; London: T & T Clark, 2003), 24, says it 'recalls Jn 5:14,' but directs his reader to 8.11 also.

²⁶ Petersen, 'OUDE,' 218.

²⁷ *Prot. Jas.* 16.2 in the versification of Oscar Cullmann, 'Infancy Gospels,' in *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1.432; *Prot. Jas.* 16.7 in the versification of Ronald F. Hock, 'The Infancy Gospel of James,' in *Complete Gospels*, 391.

²⁸ Petersen, 'OUDE,' 204.

²⁹ Petersen, 'OUDE,' 212; *Prot. Jas.* 19.3 (Cullmann)//*Prot. Jas.* 19.19 (Hock).

³⁰ In 1912, McLachlan, *St. Luke*, noted the allusion to PA in *Prot. Jas.* (98) and proceeded to argue that the author of *Prot. Jas.* read PA in the Gospel of Luke (99), and that Luke had slightly modified a version of PA he read in *Gos. Heb.* (102; see summary on 112).

³¹ Petersen, 'OUDE,' 214. D. C. Parker, review of W. L. Petersen, J. S. Vos, H. J. de Jonge, eds., *Sayings of Jesus: Canonical and Non-canonical. Essays in Honour of Tjitze Baarda*, *NovT* 41.2

The second possible second-century evidence of PA comes from a much-debated passage of Papias, as related by Eusebius.³² While discussing traditions contained in Papias' *Expositions of the Sayings of the Lord*, Eusebius claims Papias 'has expounded another story about a woman who was accused before the Lord of many sins, which the Gospel according to the Hebrews contains.'³³ Scholars debate whether the story Papias knows is that which appears in John 7.53–8.11 in later manuscripts,³⁴ but this is ultimately unanswerable with the available evidence. Translating Eusebius' *Hist. eccl.* in 402 CE, Rufinus thought the story Eusebius relates from Papias was PA, since he changes the 'woman accused . . . of many sins' (gunaiko.j evpi. pollai/j a`marti,aij diablhgei,shj) to the 'adulterous woman' (*muliere adultera*).³⁵ As Petersen notes, however, this reveals only what Rufinus thought rather than what Eusebius (or Papias) thought.³⁶ Though some scholars cite the fact that Papias describes a woman (not an adulteress) who was guilty of 'many sins' (not the one sin of adultery) as evidence that Papias is not discussing PA,³⁷ this is an insufficient reason for this conclusion. The differences

(1999): 189, affirms Petersen in this regard. Köstenberger, *John*, 248n.9, criticizes Robinson, 'Preliminary,' 35–59, for incorrectly attributing to Petersen the view that PA circulated as part of GJohn prior to *Prot. Jas.* and that the author of the apocryphal text therefore read PA in GJohn. While this is correct (Petersen technically claims one can trace 'certain constitutive elements of the Johannine *pericope adulterae*' to the late second century), Robinson's misreading is nearly inevitable. Since Petersen, 'OUDE,' 218, states that commentators concluded that PA was not a part of GJohn 'under the mistaken impression that there was no evidence' for PA prior to the *Didascalia* and that 'we now know better' (in light of the evidence from *Prot. Jas.*), and that U. Becker likewise concluded that PA came from *Gos. Heb.* 'under the mistaken impression that the *Protevangelium* evinced no dependence upon the Gospel of John . . . [and that] here too, we now know better,' and argues that *Prot. Jas.* 'knew and used the Gospel of John' (213), Petersen certainly intends to raise the possibility that *Prot. Jas.* read PA in GJohn.

³² Charles E. Hill, 'The Fragments of Papias,' in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers* (ed. Paul Foster; London: T & T Clark, 2007), 42, claims Papias 'wrote perhaps as early as about 110 and probably no later than the early 130s.'

³³ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.17 (Lake, LCL).

³⁴ Beyond the full discussion of U. Becker, *Jesus*, 92–117, see also Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1.138. More recently, Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 557–60, notes the problem of the identification of Papias' story creates for Lightfoot's inclusion of Codex D's version of PA in his edition of the Papian Fragments. See also the tradition histories offered by Ehrman, 'Jesus and the Adulteress' (which also concerns Didymus and the *Didascalia*); and Strauss, *Life of Jesus*, 410–12, both of which I find unpersuasive (see Keith, 'Recent,' n.p.). In the case of Ehrman, too much weight is given to what elements of the story each version of PA does not include, rather than what it does.

³⁵ Rufinus' Latin translation appears alongside Eusebius' Greek in Friedhelm Winkelmann, ed., *Eusebius Werke* (3 vols.; GCS n.s. 6.1–6.3; Berlin: Akademie, 1999), 2.292–3.

³⁶ Petersen, 'OUDE,' 199.

³⁷ Bruce, *Gospel of John*, 417n.4 (continues on p.418); Petersen, 'OUDE,' 197. Petersen also suggests that the woman Papias describes is 'more congruent' with the sinful woman of Luke 7 (so

suggest only that, if Papias knew PA, it may not have been the exact *version* that appears in GJohn. Papias is thus the earliest possible evidence for the story of Jesus and the adulteress/sinful woman. Though overlooked, perhaps the most interesting thing regarding the Papias citation is that Eusebius apparently does not know PA in GJohn in the fourth century since he attributes it to *Gos. Heb.*

1.3 PA in the Early Church—A Paradigm of Jesus

Along with the citations of PA and their dates, one also needs to consider the context of the citations, and thus how early Christian authors employed PA in praxis. Early Christian authors primarily cite PA as a paradigm of Jesus that Christian leaders should follow, a paradigm that they then apply to numerous situations.

One of the situations to which authors apply PA, and the one scholars most commonly cite, is adultery and/or sexual ethics. For example, Augustine famously accuses men of ‘weak faith’ of excising PA based on the anxiety that Jesus’ leniency with the adulteress could produce:

However, the pagan mind obviously shrinks from this comparison, so that some men of slight faith, or, rather, some hostile to true faith, fearing, as I believe, that liberty to sin with impunity is granted their wives, remove from their Scriptural texts the account of our Lord’s pardon of the adulteress.³⁸

O’Loughlin refers to this as the ‘sole case where the pericope was used as a material part of teaching in the area of sexual morality,’ but this is wholly incorrect.³⁹

Augustine himself elsewhere applies PA to the issue of sexual morality in a discussion on adultery and divorce in his *Serm. Dom.* and again in the *Retract.*⁴⁰ He

also Strauss, *Life of Jesus*, 410). Congruence is in the mind of the beholder, but the fact that the woman’s sins are *pollai*, is not enough to prove that Papias had a tradition other than PA in mind, especially in light of the well-established orality principle of ‘variation within the same,’ which I would argue applies equally to textual tradition and thus is relevant to Papias even if he is not citing PA as oral tradition (though most scholars think he is). (On ‘variation within the same’ see James D. G. Dunn, ‘Altering the Default Setting: Re-envisioning the Early Transmission of the Jesus Tradition,’ in his *A New Perspective on Jesus: What the Quest for the Historical Jesus Missed* [London: SPCK, 2005], 98–100; repr. from *NTS* 49 [2003]: 139–75.) Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1.138, claims PA ‘cannot be identical with Lk. 7:36–50—otherwise Eusebius would not have assigned it to the apocryphal GH [*Gos. Heb.*].’

³⁸ Augustine, *Incomp. nupt.* 2.7 (Huegelmeier, FC). Here and throughout I have followed the *SBL Handbook of Style* format of referencing Augustine’s *On Adulterous Marriages* as *De incompetentibus nuptiis* rather than *De adulterinis coniugiis* (as in CSEL).

³⁹ Thomas O’Loughlin, ‘A Woman’s Plight and the Western Fathers,’ in *Ciphers in the Sand*, 97.

⁴⁰ Augustine, *Serm. Dom.* 1.16; *Retract.* 1.18.6.

also applies PA to Nathan's confrontation of David regarding the latter's sexual sin, and parallels the experience of the adulteress' husband with Joseph, Mary's husband.⁴¹ Likewise, Ambrose applies Jesus' words to the adulteress in John 8.11 directly to the issue of catechumens who had committed adultery prior to (and since) their Christian commitments, specifically referencing Exodus 20.14—*non adulterabis*.⁴² Ambrose also employs PA when explaining David's sin with Bathsheba and notes the possible anxiety this lenient image of Jesus could produce.⁴³ Peter Chrysologus (fifth century CE) recalls PA during a sermon on Romans 7.1–6.⁴⁴ PA is thus no stranger to early Christian teaching on sexual morality.

However, two points are critical for interpreting this evidence, especially in light of the 'suppression theory' of PA's insertion that will be discussed shortly. First, these comments are not fully representative of all early Christian thinking on PA and, in some cases, not even of the particular author. Ambrose, for example, applies Jesus' treatment of the adulteress to the issue of a bishop's involvement in capital punishment,⁴⁵ and to Christian treatment of those who support capital punishment.⁴⁶ In *Epistle 50* (25), he specifies even further that Jesus is a 'model to follow' with regard to postbaptismal sin and penance.⁴⁷ He clearly does not think that PA's usefulness is limited to sexual ethics, nor do some of the other early Christian authors discussed below.

Second, the connections between PA and the issue of adultery all emerge from authors subsequent to the *terminus ad quem* for PA's insertion into GJohn and thus do not speak *directly* to how the church employed PA before its insertion but rather how it functioned once there. Other evidence from prior to the *terminus ad quem* reveals several other contexts and will be presented here, beginning with the *Didascalia*. In these citations, authors call on their readers to notice the example of Jesus and emulate it.

⁴¹ Augustine, *Enarrat. Ps.* 50.8; *Epistle 153*.

⁴² Ambrose, *Abr.* 1.4.23.

⁴³ Ambrose, *Apol. Dav. Altera* 1.1, 2.5, 12.75. At 1.1, Ambrose claims PA 'non mediocre scrupulum movere potuit inperitis.'

⁴⁴ Peter Chrysologus, *Sermon 115*.

⁴⁵ Ambrose, *Epistle 68* (26).

⁴⁶ Ambrose, *Epistle 50* (25).

⁴⁷ Ambrose, *Epistle 50* (25) (Beyenka, FC).

The author of the *Didascalia* recalls PA while instructing bishops regarding the forgiveness of sinners.⁴⁸ Following the citation of PA, he states: ‘In this then let our Savior and King and God, be to you a *standard*, O bishops, and *imitate Him*.’⁴⁹ Note that the author explicitly refers to Jesus’ actions in PA as a pattern that bishops are to emulate. Furthermore, it is significant that it is in this context that the author invokes PA, since chapters two and three of the *Didascalia* instruct husbands and wives on proper treatment of one another. That is, the *Didascalia* invokes PA in its instructions to *bishops* on how to deal with sinners generally, not sexual sinners specifically and also not in its instructions on proper marriage behaviour.

Following its literary ancestor (the *Didascalia*), the fourth-century *Ap. Con.* similarly calls its bishop-readers to emulate the example of Jesus in PA. However, the author includes a section not found in the *Didascalia* in which Matthew is presented as a tax collector, Peter a denier, and Paul a persecutor.⁵⁰ All three of these serve as apostolic precedents of God’s use of sinners. In common with the *Didascalia* version of PA, *Apos. Con.* emphasizes that the elders ‘left the sentence to him’ and thus Jesus is again the paradigmatic forgiver⁵¹ as the adulteress joins the ranks of other famous sinners. Most important for present purposes is that the *Apos. Con.* also repeats the *Didascalia*’s instructions that bishops should ‘imitate’ the ‘pattern’ which Jesus’ actions with the woman established.⁵²

Likely evincing knowledge of PA slightly earlier than Ambrose and Jerome,⁵³ Didymus the Blind cites PA when claiming that slave owners should judge their slaves based on performance rather than attitude, implying that the owners themselves at times may have a poor attitude and are thus incapable of judging their inferiors for the same sin.⁵⁴ For Didymus, slave owners should act like the Jesus who forgives rather than the Jewish leaders who judge.

⁴⁸ See p.199 above for quotation.

⁴⁹ *Didascalia* 7 [89] (Vööbus; emphasis added).

⁵⁰ *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* 2.24.

⁵¹ Similarly, Leo the Great (d. 461) cites John 8.11 as evidence that Jesus theoretically could have forgiven Judas (*Sermon* 62 4).

⁵² *Didascalia* 7 [89]//*Apos. Con.* 2.24.

⁵³ See footnote 11 above.

⁵⁴ Ehrman, ‘Jesus and the Adulteress,’ 25.

The aforementioned citations of PA (both prior to and following the *terminus ad quem* for its insertion into GJohn) demonstrate that the primary manner in which early Christians read/used PA was as an example for Christian leaders (often specified as bishops) to follow. At times this included how leaders should treat the issue of adultery, but it could also include more diverse applications such as capital punishment and treatment of slaves.

1.4 Summary of the Evidence Concerning PA's Insertion into GJohn

Several facts emerge from the above information. First, a story of Jesus interacting in a forgiving manner⁵⁵ with an adulteress/sinful woman circulated in the early Church *at least* from the early second century, 'a time scarcely later than the formation of the canonical gospels.'⁵⁶ Second, some early Christian authors cite PA as being located in a gospel context, which *could* be GJohn but may not have been, and Eusebius explicitly attributes it elsewhere. Third, early Christian authors primarily cite PA as a paradigm of Jesus that leaders should follow, and this paradigm is then applied to a variety of practical situations. Some of these situations include sexual ethics, but others are wholly unrelated to Christians' attitudes to adultery and/or marriage. Fourth, by the mid-fourth century (at the very latest) an interpolator had placed PA into GJohn at John 7.53–8.11, where scribes copied it in many manuscripts, and from which Christian writers cited it authoritatively. These facts, therefore, are the building blocks with which one must construct a theory of PA's insertion. To previous attempts at such a theory we now turn.

2. Previous Assessments of PA's Insertion

In assessing the evidence concerning PA's insertion into GJohn, scholars have normally taken either a socio-historical approach or a text-critical approach. The former views PA's entrance into GJohn from the perspective of PA, and thus suggests a *Sitz im Leben der Kirche* in light of the content of the pericope. The latter views PA's entrance into GJohn from the perspective of the manuscript of GJohn and thus suggests a stage of manuscript transmission that would permit the text to absorb a foreign pericope.

⁵⁵ The phrase 'forgiving manner' is employed here because, despite the fact that the majority of interpreters (ancient and modern) cite PA as an example of Jesus forgiving a sinner, in no version of the story does Jesus ever actually forgive the adulteress.

⁵⁶ Parker, *Living Text*, 100.

2.1 A Socio-Historical Answer—The Suppression Theory

As aforementioned, both Ambrose and Augustine noted the anxiety that Jesus' stance with the adulteress could produce.⁵⁷ Scholarly conceptions of Christian wariness towards PA for this reason provide the basis for the most prominent explanation for PA's textual history. In an oft-cited article, Riesenfeld argues that early Christians denied PA a place in 'the tradition and the versions which were canonized' because 'the account came to contrast in a disturbing and embarrassing way with the praxis of church discipline' with regard to the issue of adultery.⁵⁸ He says,

The climax of the pericope, the words of Jesus: "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again," as time passed, must hardly have appeared to be in agreement with the way in which any regrettable cases of adultery were proceeded against in the communities. This disagreement must be thought to have led to more and more hesitation in quoting and using our pericope, which resulted in its slipping out of the mainstream of the tradition.⁵⁹

This is an extremely popular position, as many scholars, many of whom explicitly follow Riesenfeld, account for PA's delayed insertion into (or, for those who argue for Johannine authenticity of PA, excision from) the canon by means of this 'suppression theory.'⁶⁰ As the quotation from Riesenfeld shows, this theory asserts that PA initially fell out of favour with early Christians because of Jesus' lenient stance with the adulteress. (Farrar notes the further problem that Jesus' character

⁵⁷ Ambrose, *Apol. Dav. Altera* 1.1; Augustine, *Incomp. nupt.* 2.7.

⁵⁸ Harald Riesenfeld, 'The Pericope *de adultera* in the Early Christian Tradition,' in *The Gospel Tradition: Essays by Harald Riesenfeld* (trans. E. Margaret Rowley and Robert A. Kraft; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 98–99.

⁵⁹ Riesenfeld, 'Pericope *de adultera*,' 99.

⁶⁰ See Bernard, *Gospel According to St. John*, 2.716–7; Bishop, 'Pericope Adulterae,' 40, 42; Brown, *Gospel According to John I–XII*, 335; Boice, *Gospel of John: Volume 2*, 603; Burge, 'Specific Problem,' 146–8; Henry J. Cadbury, 'A Possible Case of Lukan Authorship (John 7_{53–8.11}),' *HTR* 10.3 (1917): 243n.14; R. Alan Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (IBT; Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 170; Farrar, 'Gospel,' 31–32; Gench, *Back*, 137, 151–5; Grundmann, *Evangelium*, 224; Zane C. Hodges, 'The Woman Taken in Adultery (John 7:53–8:11): The Text,' *BSac* 136 (1979): 331; Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel*, 346–7; O'Day, 'John 7:53–8:11,' 631–40; Meyer, *Gospel of John*, 125; Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 883–4; Rius-Camps, 'Origen Lucano,' 173–4; Rius-Camps, 'Pericope,' 383; Ross, 'Floating Words,' 155; J. Martin C. Scott, 'On the Trail of a Good Story: John 7.53–8.11 in the Gospel Tradition,' in *Ciphers in the Sand*, 53–82; Graham Stanton, *Gospel Truth?: New Light on Jesus and the Gospels* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), 47; Allison A. Trites, 'The Woman Taken in Adultery,' *BSac* 131 (1974): 145; Witherington, *Women*, 38–39. To my knowledge, Jennifer Wright Knust was the first to refer to this explanation as the 'suppression theory.'

could have been called into question since he was alone with a woman.⁶¹) The theory further explains PA's eventual inclusion in GJohn by asserting that the insertion occurred only after Christianity firmly established a penance system and there was no threat of this lenient Jesus overturning it. Again, Riesenfeld provides a representative statement:

It was still a good message that forgiveness could be won even for such a sin as adultery, and now one knew that it likewise applied to the one who was baptized and Christian. But the church . . . had the care of souls and church discipline so firmly in its hands that forgiveness for postbaptismal sins without severe penance appeared unreasonable, and this meant that no one any longer would get the idea of interpreting the account in a way incompatible with this doctrine of penance.⁶²

More recently, Scott also expresses this thought when he claims, 'That it gains more established status by the fifth century reflects that fact that the Church by then was sufficiently secure in its disciplinary codes to be able to cope with the full inclusion of the text.'⁶³

The suppression theory of PA's textual history has tremendous explanatory power and no true rival to date. Nonetheless I find it implausible, and before proceeding to other criticisms I first note the faulty methodology that underlies this theory. First, the suppression theory assumes that the gospel authors and subsequent copyists who failed to include PA were aware of it in the first place. Second, the suppression theory then assumes that these Christians *wanted* to include PA in authoritative texts. Third, the suppression theory assumes further that 'something' prohibited the authors and copyists from placing the tradition in a gospel text, a 'something' that eventually changed and then allowed Christians to include PA in their texts. The explanatory power of the suppression theory resides in its ability to replace the vague prohibitive 'something' with content that explains the other assumptions as well. It provides this content (in fine fashion) by making a fourth assumption—that the early Church primarily understood and used PA for its teaching on adultery and/or female sexual sin prior to its inclusion in GJohn. This fourth assumption appears to derive from the conflation of today's ecclesial environment and the ancient ecclesial environment. Taylor is a prime example: 'For us to-day the

⁶¹ Farrar, 'Gospel,' 30.

⁶² Riesenfeld, 'Pericope *de adultera*,' 107.

⁶³ Scott, 'On the Trail,' 77.

story is precious because it reveals the attitude of Jesus towards a sinful woman. So must it have been from the beginning.’⁶⁴ From this fourth assumption, the theory posits early Christian disapproval of adultery and the eventual altered stance toward adulterers that a developed penance system allowed.⁶⁵ Thus, according to the suppression theory, early Christians embraced PA and wanted to include it, but disapproved of adultery and could not tolerate an image of Jesus as seemingly tolerant of it. Once the practical approach to adultery was framed by a penance system, the Church could then allow its beloved PA into its official image of Jesus.

This tidy explanation to a difficult textual problem is ultimately flawed. The proponents of the suppression theory have not actually proven that the early Christian authors and copyists categorically had knowledge of PA (the first assumption) or, more importantly, desired to place it in an authoritative gospel text (the second assumption) but were prohibited (the third assumption). Nor have they proven that PA’s main didactic content and use in the Church related to female sexual sin (the fourth assumption). The theory provides its explanation by uncritically connecting PA’s textual history and narrative content to ecclesiastical praxis with adultery; i.e., the suppression theory assumes the historical context it seeks to assert.

Three further points exacerbate the problematic assumptions of the suppression theory. First, one should begin an investigation into PA’s eventual inclusion not with the *assumption* that PA was prohibited from entering a gospel earlier, but with the *fact* that, prior to the 380’s CE, someone did insert it. That is, one should ask not what kept PA from getting in earlier (as does Riesenfeld when his question—‘Why then did the account of the adulteress come back into the Gospel tradition?’—implies a *re-emergence* of PA in the tradition rather than an initial emergence), but rather what caused an interpolator to insert it in the first place. Similarly, one should not assume that Christians were prohibited from inserting PA when they wanted and only later accomplished this goal, but rather that when Christians wanted to insert PA, they did so.

⁶⁴ Taylor, *Formation*, 84. Admirably, however, Taylor does not allow this assumption to prohibit him from noting other contexts where Christians would have found PA instructive. He continues, ‘But among the first Christians it must have been valued because it disclosed His attitude to the Mosaic Law.’

⁶⁵ Riesenfeld, ‘Pericope *de adultera*,’ 107.

Second, even if one starts with the faulty assumption that the Church's view of adultery and Jesus' seemingly lenient stance on it were the cause of PA's exclusion/inclusion, it is still difficult to explain how the accounts of the Sinner who anointed Jesus (Luke 7.36–50) and the Samaritan Woman (John 4.7–39) escaped unscathed. Both of these pericopae provide equally sexually-charged narratives and equally authoritative pronouncements by Jesus in favour of the sinful woman.⁶⁶ As Knust states, 'The narrative content of the *pericope adulterae*, therefore, cannot adequately explain its absence from patristic exegesis or its textual instability; some other explanation must be found.'⁶⁷ Knust's statement needs qualification, since it is not the narrative content per se that cannot explain PA's textual history, but rather the narrative content understood in terms of the adulteress or her sin. Knust is correct, however, that one must seek elsewhere for a persuasive explanation for PA's inclusion.⁶⁸ I will argue shortly that one should concentrate instead upon what PA adds that is otherwise missing from the authoritative image of Jesus in the Synoptics and John—the grapho-literate Jesus.

A third problem that highlights the inadequacy of the suppression theory is that its fourth assumption does not reflect the complete ancient evidence. Early Christian authors do not employ PA solely, or even primarily, for its teaching on sexual ethics, as the survey above demonstrated. In this light, one must note that the primary evidence that supporters of the suppression theory cite is also the only explicit place where an author notes the sin of the adulteress as a cause for excision of the text—Augustine's *Incomp. nupt.* 2.7.⁶⁹ Furthermore, there is good reason to

⁶⁶ Also noted by Knust, 'Jesus,' 72–73. Riesenfeld, 'Pericope de adultera,' 106, must posit the 'problem of penance' *a priori* in order to assert 'an essential difference' between the woman in Luke 7 and the adulteress in PA.

⁶⁷ Knust, 'Jesus,' 73.

⁶⁸ Some other suggestions concerning PA's narrative content are equally unconvincing. Coleman, 'Woman,' 409–10, claims PA was eventually included in a canonical context because of its portrayal of Jesus' authority. She says, 'My conclusion is that the preservation of this story is attributable to the fact that it emphasizes our Lord's divine authority as Law-giver. . . .' However, Coleman's theory suffers from the same inadequacy as the suppression theory. Jesus' 'divine authority as Law-giver' is an emphasis throughout the canonical accounts of Jesus. What, then, does PA contribute to the portrait that was previously absent in that respect? Similarly, when Blass, *Philology*, 160–64, argues that Luke penned PA in a Roman edition of his gospel but did not place it in the Eastern version due to fear that law-observant Jewish Christians may have been offended by Jesus' posture toward Mosaic Law, one must note that there is nothing in PA regarding Jesus' attitude toward Torah that does not appear elsewhere in Synoptic and Johannine tradition.

⁶⁹ Ambrose says nothing of PA's textual status when noting the problems it can create for the 'inexperienced/ignorant' (*inperitis*) in *Apol. Dav. Altera* 1.1.

be suspicious of his claims. Augustine is not primarily concerned with explaining PA's textual status but rather with hurling accusations of foul play with the text at his opponents: 'Augustine's comments are unreliable: he was not simply reporting the attitude of certain Christians toward the *pericope adulterae*, he had seized upon the absence of the story from some gospel manuscripts as evidence of the unscrupulousness of those who would disagree with his stance on divorce.'⁷⁰ Even Scott, a supporter of the suppression theory, acknowledges, 'The consistent absence of the text in the earliest manuscripts makes the idea of its deliberate *removal* unlikely.'⁷¹ Furthermore, and while his alternative explanation of PA's textual history is unconvincing, McLachlan correctly observes, 'We can hardly agree with Augustine that the story was removed from certain MSS. by men who feared *peccandi immunitatem dari mulieribus suis*, otherwise we should expect to find in the Gospels a vigorous campaign against thieves, harlots, and sinners.'⁷² And, as noted above, Augustine's and others' statements that relate PA to sexual ethics *all occur after PA has already been inserted into GJohn* and thus one cannot cite them strictly as evidence for theories on how PA functioned prior to its insertion.

Worth mention in relation to the suppression theory is the slightly related but different tradition history for PA put forward by U. Becker.⁷³ He argues that PA's significance for the early Church initially resided in its portrayal of Jesus' conflict with the scribes and Pharisees.⁷⁴ During the second century, though, the locus of PA's significance shifted from Jesus' statement in John 8.7 to 8.11 in the context of church fights over deadly sins (especially adultery) since 'Jesus spricht hier eine Ehebrecherin frei.'⁷⁵ Whereas the suppression theory assumes that issues of discipline kept PA from attaining importance, Becker argues that PA's importance increased as supporters of a more lax penitential stance (*laxen Bußdisziplin*) saw in it

⁷⁰ Knust, 'Jesus,' 66. For a similar usage of PA in polemic against a rival group, see the text attributed to a Saint Nikon, entitled, *On the Impious Religion of the Vile Armenians*, printed in Cotelerius, ed., *Ss. Patrum*, 1.237–239.

⁷¹ Scott, 'On the Trail,' 74 (emphasis original).

⁷² McLachlan, *St. Luke*, 111.

⁷³ U. Becker, *Jesus*, 174–8.

⁷⁴ U. Becker, *Jesus*, 175.

⁷⁵ U. Becker, *Jesus*, 176. With Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 891, one should note that Jesus technically 'says nothing about forgiveness.'

a prime example.⁷⁶ Indeed, according to Becker, PA's importance increased to the point that, for it to be an authoritative example, it needed to be placed in a canonical gospel. A scribe thus placed PA at the end of GJohn (the end of the fourfold collection) by the beginning of the third century at the latest, from whence PA was then placed between John 7 and 8.⁷⁷ Commendably, Becker notes the importance of placing PA in the fourfold gospel collection (*das Tetraevangelium*), and I will return to this below. Nonetheless, his overall theory is not persuasive for the same reason the suppression theory is not—neither PA's narrative focus nor its primary usage in the early Church revolved around sexual ethics and/or female sin. Already in 1967, Aland had levelled this criticism against Becker's theory.⁷⁸

Like the suppression theory, therefore, Becker's is an inadequate explanation for why an interpolator inserted PA into GJohn.⁷⁹

2.2 Text-Critical Answers

Rather than positing a socio-historical context that explains PA's insertion into GJohn (but sometimes in conjunction with it), some scholars focus upon the transmission process or some other aspect of the textual tradition.⁸⁰

Aland and Aland claim a second century date for PA's inclusion and explicitly cite the chaotic status of the manuscript tradition as enabling it: '[PA] must have been admitted in parts of the Greek Gospel tradition at some time in the second century—a period when there was greater textual freedom with the text. . . .

⁷⁶ U. Becker, *Jesus*, 176. Cf. Riesner, *Jesus*, 231; von Campenhausen, 'Zur Perikope,' 164–75 (esp. 172–5).

⁷⁷ U. Becker, *Jesus*, 176.

⁷⁸ Aland, 'Glosse,' 41: 'Wäre es so, wie Becker annimmt, müßten uns wenigstens Spuren davon überliefert sein, hat das 3. Jahrhundert doch eine lebhaft literarische Debatte über die Vergebbarkeit der Todsünden geführt. . . . Sein Irrtum beginnt schon bei der Interpretation der Perikope' (see more fully p. 39–46).

⁷⁹ Similarly sceptical that PA's tradition history is accounted for by the adulteress/issue of adultery are Blass, *Philology*, 160; Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1.735; Knust, 'Jesus,' 64–73; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 189; Parker, *Living Text*, 101; Zahn, *Introduction*, 3.346n.3.

⁸⁰ Note that Ehrman, *Misquoting*, 65, and Ferguson, 'Woman,' 280, suggest that PA first entered manuscripts as marginalia, but neither proposes a date. Note also that Goodspeed, *Problems*, 108, posits that PA entered the manuscript tradition via a Latin scribe rather than a Greek one. This must be considered possible given the strong presence of PA in the Latin tradition (both manuscripts and Patristics) compared to its presence in Greek tradition and will be discussed further at the close of this chapter.

Only then were such extensive insertions possible.’⁸¹ Earlier than the Alands, McLachlan similarly claims the ‘state of the text in the second century and its free handling by scribes [is] responsible for the varying positions of the section in the Gospels of Luke and John.’⁸²

Zahn implies a second-century insertion date when he suggests that Papias inserted PA into GJohn (but not necessarily at John 7.53–8.11), and that this influenced the scribe who placed PA specifically at John 7.53–8.11. He says,

It is very probable that the passage was inserted in the N.T. from Papias. Probably it is one of those apostolic traditions which Papias inserted in connection with his interpretations of Jesus, most likely in connection with John vii. 24 and viii. 15, so that those who gave it its present place in the Gospel were perhaps influenced by their source, the work of Papias.⁸³

Zahn was hardly the first person to think along these lines, however. In 1641, Hugo Grotius, whom Becker describes as ‘der mit als erster auf solche Fragen Antwort zu geben versuchte’ and as the scholar upon whom all following exegetes are dependent,⁸⁴ claimed that PA was inserted ‘by Papias or another Johannine disciple into a Greek (version) of GJohn’ (*a Papia autem aliisque Iohannis discipulis Græco Iohannis*).⁸⁵

Furthermore, some of the Papian fragments (most recently and helpfully collected in Holmes’ updating of Lightfoot’s *Apostolic Fathers*) reveal the ancient tradition of Papias as scribe for the Fourth Evangelist, as well as PA. The authors of fragment 19 (from Codex Vaticanus Alexandrinus 14; ninth century CE) and fragment 20 claim that John dictated his gospel to Papias.⁸⁶ Fragment 23 (from the tenth-century Arabic *World History* by Agapius of Hierapolis) claims Papias (‘a prominent teacher’ in Hierapolis) wrote a treatise on GJohn where he relates PA.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Aland and Aland, *Text*, 307. Cf. Aland, ‘Glosse,’ 45.

⁸² McLachlan, *St. Luke*, 112. *Contra* this explanation for PA’s multiple manuscript locations, see Chapter Five.

⁸³ Zahn, *Introduction*, 3.346n.3.

⁸⁴ U. Becker, *Jesus*, 4.

⁸⁵ Hugo Grotius, *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum* (2 vols.; Amsterdam: Joh. & Cornelius Blaeu, 1641), 1.922.

⁸⁶ Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 585.

⁸⁷ Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 589.

Fragment 26 (from the thirteenth-century Armenian *Explanations of Holy Scripture* by Vardan Vardapet) claims Papias actually wrote PA, and the author identifies Eusebius as the source of this tradition: ‘The story of the adulterous woman, which the other Christians have written in their gospel, was written by a certain Papias, a disciple of John, who was declared and condemned as a heretic. Eusebius said this.’⁸⁸ It is a short distance indeed from the ideas that Papias wrote GJohn (fragments 19 and 20), wrote a treatise on that gospel where he also discusses PA (fragment 23), and wrote PA (fragment 26), to the conclusion that Papias inserted PA into GJohn (as suggested by Grotius and Zahn). There is little reason to consider this tradition as reliable, however. The idea that Papias himself authored PA is twelve centuries removed from Papias (who, being the author of a tradition that ‘other Christians’ include [PA], is conveniently identified as a heretic). Furthermore, it is likely that the author of fragment 26 has deduced that Papias was responsible for PA solely from his reading of Eusebius. If one is to assert a second-century date for PA’s insertion into GJohn, the ‘free’ state of the manuscript tradition is much more stable ground for making such a claim.⁸⁹

According to Knust, the majority of scholars see the third century as the upper limit for PA’s insertion.⁹⁰ Wisse prefers a third-century date when he states that PA ‘was introduced into the manuscript tradition of John perhaps as early as the second, but more likely during the third century.’⁹¹ He claims that the purpose of interpolating PA was to preserve ‘a noble anecdote about Jesus known in the “free” tradition,’ but does not attempt to explain what—precisely—about PA demanded

⁸⁸ Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 591. This tradition is particularly interesting in light of the text mentioned in footnote 70 from a St. Nikon, which Cotelarius prints in his *Ss. Patrum*. Whereas the Armenian Vardapet accuses ‘the other Christians’ of including PA, St. Nikon claims the Armenians ‘throw out’ (evkba, llousi) the story of the adulteress (Cotelarius, *Ss. Patrum*, 1.238). If the dating of Vardapet is correct (thirteenth century CE), and one may tentatively view Nikon as referring to ‘Vardapetians’ and Vardapet as referring to ‘Niconians,’ this would grant warrant to the scepticism of Westcott and Hort that the Nikon who authored the anti-Armenian tract is ‘the Armenian Nikon of Cent. X,’ since the author would have to be dated closer to the thirteenth century (see Westcott and Hort, ‘Notes,’ 82).

⁸⁹ With regards to the ‘free’ state of the manuscript tradition in the second century CE, one should note that PA’s multiple locations attested in manuscripts from the tenth century and onwards (see Chapter Five) demonstrate that, to some extent, the manuscript tradition retained a level of fluidity into the medieval period.

⁹⁰ Knust, ‘Early Christian Re-writing,’ 494. Though not discussed here, Blass, *Philology*, 162, in a complicated and somewhat entertaining (though implausible) tradition history, also suggests a third-century insertion date.

⁹¹ Wisse, ‘Nature and Purpose,’ 48.

preservation. Like the Alands, he too sees the enabling mechanism as the freedom of the manuscript tradition: ‘That this major interpolation could establish itself in spite of wide awareness of the antiquity of the shorter text serves as further proof that before printing there was little or no opportunity for ecclesiastical control on the transmission of the text.’⁹² As a reminder, Becker also proposes, ‘Die Ehebrecherinperikope ist erst im 3. Jh. aus außerkanonischer Überlieferung in das Tetraevangelium aufgenommen worden.’⁹³

To complete the range of proposed dates, recall that Riesenfeld claims PA entered *back into* ‘the Gospel tradition’ beginning in the fourth century.⁹⁴ Furthermore, Kinukawa claims PA entered GJohn ‘around the fifth century,’ though she offers no explanation for preferring that date.⁹⁵ Thus, scholars have proposed the second century (Petersen, Alands, Zahn, Papian fragments), third century (Wisse, Becker, cf. Knust), fourth century (Riesenfeld), and fifth century (Kinukawa) as candidates for PA’s insertion.

Taking a different approach, Smith suggests that it is not the instability of the manuscript tradition, but rather the instability of GJohn’s narrative between John 7 and 8 that accounts for PA’s insertion. He says,

The implacable hostility that manifests itself among the authorities in chapter 7 continues as the chief subject matter of chapter 8, although the connection between the chapters is otherwise quite loose. (Thus the story of the woman taken in adultery, which was no part of the original text of the Gospel, was inserted between them, 8:1–11 in the traditional versification.)⁹⁶

As demonstrated in Chapters Six through Eight, however, the narrative itself is quite interconnected throughout John 7 and 8 and I posited the interpolator’s reading of the Johannine narrative in these chapters, especially the former, as the impetus for inclusion at John 7.53–8.11. That is, *pace* Smith, the choice of John 7.53–8.11 as a

⁹² Wisse, ‘Nature and Purpose,’ 48.

⁹³ U. Becker, *Jesus*, 39.

⁹⁴ Riesenfeld, ‘Pericope *de adultera*,’ 107.

⁹⁵ Hisako Kinukawa, ‘On John 7:53–8:11,’ 95. Kinukawa claims that PA was *meaningful* for the fifth-century church because ‘sin was already viewed as largely an internal and individualized matter,’ but does not claim this issue prompted its insertion.

⁹⁶ D. Moody Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John* (NTTh; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 31.

location is not the result of the narrative breaking down at this point, but rather the result of the narrative working.

The previously surveyed proposals actually answer only what enabled the interpolator to insert PA or, more specifically, what enabled the text to retain PA once inserted. They do not technically answer *why* the interpolator sought to augment the *Johannine* image of Jesus in the first place. Alternatively, positing the socio-historical context defined by the adulteress/adultery is an inadequate theory as well. Thus, while I agree with, for example, the Alands and Wisse, that the state of the manuscript tradition made the interpolator's job easier, one must posit another socio-historical context that explains why *this particular* image of Jesus was inserted into *this particular* gospel (collection). Like Wisse, I will affirm a 'possible second-century but more-likely third-century' insertion date, but will base this primarily upon a particular socio-historical context—the literary environment of early Christianity as it encountered paganism.

3. *The Context for the Insertion of a Grapho-Literate Jesus*

When constructing a plausible historical context for PA's insertion, scholars should take their cue not from the adulteress, her sin, or the Church's opinion about it. Rather, scholars should take their cue from the unique offering of PA to the canonical or proto-orthodox image of Jesus—the attribution of the skill of writing. Nowhere else in canonical or non-canonical tradition is there a portrayal of Jesus writing. Thus, one should ask, 'In what cultural context would early Christians most benefit from augmenting their Jesus with grapho-literacy?' To provide a portrait of early Christianity in this regard, I will first present pagan criticisms of Christian illiteracy and then discuss two interrelated responses to this criticism: the rise of educated bishops; and early Christian portrayals of Jesus as a literate or supraliterate figure. I will then suggest some further considerations for why I prefer a third-century inclusion date rather than a second-century one.

3.1 Pagan Criticisms of Christian Illiteracy

Though criticisms of the intellectual stature of Christians likely began as early as the life of Jesus (John 7.15) and the ministry of the apostles (Acts 4.13), they intensified with second-century critics such as Celsus, and set the stage for the inclusion of PA into GJohn. Pagan critics seized not only upon the questionable literate status of Jesus himself, whom some traditions held to be a carpenter/artisan (Mark 6.3), but also upon the apparent proletariat status of Christianity as a whole: ‘The perception that Christianity consisted of a sect constituted mainly by lower labouring classes greatly contributed to the sense of disdain felt for the Jesus movement by its literate pagan critics.’⁹⁷ A brief survey of pagan criticisms and Christian responses will follow, highlighting the works of Celsus, Lucian, Galen, and Minucius Felix.⁹⁸

The third-century Christian writer Origen offers a lengthy response to the second-century pagan critic Celsus, who wrote ‘the first systematic attack on Christianity’ of which scholars are aware.⁹⁹ One topic that Origen focuses upon specifically is the education level of Jesus’s followers. This is necessary because Celsus had charged that Christianity was ‘successful only among the uneducated because of its vulgarity and utter illiteracy.’¹⁰⁰ In response, Origen says the following concerning his Christian forbearers:

I also affirm in reply to this that to people who can study the question about Jesus’ apostles intelligently and reasonably it will appear that these men taught Christianity and succeeded in bringing many to obey the word of God by divine power. For in them there was no power of speaking or of giving an ordered narrative by the standards of Greek dialectical or rhetorical arts which convinced their hearers. It seems to me that if Jesus had chosen men who were wise in the eyes of the multitude, and who were capable of thinking and speaking acceptably to crowds, and if he had used them as the means of propagating his teaching, he might on very good grounds have been suspected of

⁹⁷ Kannaday, *Apologetic Discourse*, 117.

⁹⁸ For fuller discussion, see Stephen Benko, ‘Pagan Criticisms of Christianity During the First Two Centuries A.D.,’ *ANRW* 23.2.1055–1118. With specific reference to the current discussion, see also Allen Hilton, ‘The Dumb Speak: Early Christian Illiteracy and Pagan Criticism’ (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1997); Kannaday, *Apologetic Discourse*.

⁹⁹ Benko, ‘Pagan Criticism,’ 1101. Similarly, Kannaday, *Apologetic Discourse*, 31.

¹⁰⁰ Origen, *Cels.* 1.27 (Chadwick). For pagan criticisms aimed specifically at Jesus and possible Christian responses, see Kannaday, *Apologetic Discourse*, 101–39.

making use of a method similar to that of philosophers who are leaders of some particular sect. The truth of the claim that his teaching is divine would no longer have been self-evident, in that the gospel and the preaching were in the persuasive words of the wisdom that consists in literary style and composition. And the faith, like the faith of the philosophers of this world in their doctrines, would have been in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God. If anyone saw fisherfolk and tax-collectors who had not had even a primary education (as the gospel records of them—and Celsus did believe them in this respect, that they were right about the disciples' lack of learning), and who with great courage not only spoke to Jews about faith in Jesus but also preached him among the other nations with success, would he not try to find out the source of their persuasive power? For it is not that which is popularly supposed to be power.¹⁰¹

Origen here engages in the same type of rhetoric that Luke displays in Acts 4—he admits the limited access to texts and their benefits amongst the apostles and attempts to turn it into proof of the veracity of their message. True rhetorical power, according to Origen, is not the power associated with education and literacy, but with the divine message of the uneducated 'fisherfolk and tax-collectors who had not even a primary education' and thus cannot be accused of philosophical trickery when assessing the success of their message. Hilton identifies this common stance in the apologists: 'What is peculiar about the apologists' response to the charge that Christians could not read or lacked education is the absence of any refutation. . . . In fact, not one of the apologists who address this criticism denies its accuracy.'¹⁰² Second-century criticisms, in Origen's case from Celsus, made this response necessary. Gamble says, 'Origen's statement shows that the level of education and literary culture in early Christianity were already the subjects of criticism in the late second century, when Celsus composed his attack on Christianity.'¹⁰³

Origen was not alone in his defence of the followers of Jesus, nor was Celsus alone in his criticism.¹⁰⁴ Justin Martyr (second century CE), for example, admits in his *First Apology* that there are 'those among us who do not even know the letters of

¹⁰¹ Origen, *Cels.* 1.62 (Chadwick).

¹⁰² Hilton, 'Dumb Speak,' 48. Likewise, Snyder, *Teachers*, 8.

¹⁰³ Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 1.

¹⁰⁴ For a full treatment of Celsus' attack on Christianity, see John Granger Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* (STAC 3; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 17–102.

the alphabet, who are uncultured and rude in speech.’¹⁰⁵ Justin quickly retreats from his admission, however, and also asserts that such are also ‘wise and believing in mind,’ and attributes this to ‘the power of God’ instead of ‘human wisdom.’¹⁰⁶

In his famous satire, *The Passing of Peregrinus*, Lucian (second century CE) describes how his main character quickly rose to prominence amongst Christians due to their lack of education.

And—how else could it be?—in a trice he made them look like children; he was prophet, cult-leader, head of the synagogue, and everything, all by himself. He interpreted and explained some of their books and even composed many and they even revered him as a god, made use of him as a lawgiver, and set him down as a protector, next after that other, to be sure, whom they still worship, the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world.¹⁰⁷

Lucian is, of course, offering a parody; yet, stereotypes exist for a reason. It is telling that Peregrinus’ ability to *interpret* holy books and *write* his own leads him into supreme authority, being worshipped second only to Jesus himself. As an outside observer, Lucian simply cannot take Christians seriously. ‘Because they are uneducated, Christians have not developed their faculty of judgment sufficiently to see through the charlatan’s ruse. They are laypersons with respect to such analytical skills.’¹⁰⁸

Second-century Galen also notes Christians’ lack of critical awareness. Though he appreciates the morality of Christians, he notes their intellectual inferiority: ‘Most people are unable to follow any demonstrative argument consecutively; hence they need parables . . . just as now we see the people called Christians drawing their faith from parables.’¹⁰⁹ Galen was a ‘sympathetic observer of Christianity’ but ‘criticized their lack of philosophical training.’¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 60 (Falls, FC).

¹⁰⁶ Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 60 (Falls, FC).

¹⁰⁷ Lucian, *Peregr.* 11 (Harmon, LCL).

¹⁰⁸ Hilton, ‘Dumb Speak,’ 55.

¹⁰⁹ This text was preserved in Arabic quotations and originally part of Galen’s summary of Plato’s *Republic*. An English translation and discussion is provided in Richard Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians* (OCPM; London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 15.

¹¹⁰ Benko, ‘Pagan Criticism,’ 1100.

Likewise, Minucius Felix's character Caecilius, a representative pagan, offers a critique. While lauding their attempt to make meaning of the world, Caecilius describes Christians as 'untrained in education, outcasts from humane studies, ignorant of even the meanest skills.'¹¹¹ Hilton observes, 'According to Caecilius, all humanity should take offense that Christians should pronounce on the universe and the divine.'¹¹²

Christian apologists such as Justin Martyr and, later, Origen, found it imperative to address the assessments of Celsus, Lucian, Galen, and Minucius Felix, as these examples, which are only a sample of the many extant criticisms, demonstrate. Hilton summarizes the position of Christianity's defenders: 'This reality and the accuracy of the critics' assertion left them with two options: either they could remain silent on the matter and leave the charge unaddressed, or they could confess and make the best of it.'¹¹³

3.2 The Christian Response

It is not necessary here to belabour any further the point that Jesus and Christians were open to the criticism of illiteracy. The criticisms established that if Christians were going to influence this particular sector of Greco-Roman culture, they would have to do so on similar literary and educational terms. One should thus see second-century pagan criticisms (as well as likely first-century antecedents) as catalysts for the Christian intellectual response. Two of the ways the Church provided this response are critical for the present discussion. First, it became increasingly necessary for bishops, as leaders/teachers of the flock and representatives of the Church to pagan society, to be literate, educated, and articulate. The paradigm for bishops as leaders and teachers, however, was Jesus, the leader and teacher *par excellence*. Thus, second, as the requirements for Christian leaders and teachers shifted toward those of literary culture, so did the portrayal of their paradigm of Jesus.

3.2.1 Literacy and Early Christian Bishops/Teachers/Leaders

In light of the criticisms of their pagan contemporaries, Gamble says,

¹¹¹ Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 5.2–4 (Clarke, ACW).

¹¹² Hilton, 'Dumb Speak,' 69.

¹¹³ Hilton, 'Dumb Speak,' 49.

It is scarcely accidental that from the second century onward Christian bishops appear to have been among the best-educated Christians, that well-educated converts tended to be quickly enrolled in the clerical orders, or that the vast bulk of early Christian literature was written by clerics.¹¹⁴

One can observe the degree of importance attached to literacy by the manifestation of the concomitant power it afforded bishops in the textual community(ies) of the Church. That is, the use of literacy amongst bishops was not solely a response to pagan sceptics—it was equally a technology of power, enabling bishops to establish and maintain their authority. Fox claims that in pre-Constantinian Christianity power ‘was vested above all to bishops’ and ‘in a great city . . . there would usually be no question: bishops were literate and articulate.’¹¹⁵ Two bishops who made particular use of their literacy in terms of power are Cyprian (mid third century CE) and Ambrose (late fourth century CE), the importance of the latter of which for the present study has already been noted.

Cyprian’s correspondence is ‘the richest of all our sources . . . to see literacy and power at work in a major bishop’s life.’¹¹⁶ Cyprian’s *Epistle* 45 demonstrates throughout its text that it was already a common custom by the 250’s for bishops to correspond with one another via writing.¹¹⁷ In fact, it was so common that, in *Epistle* 9, Cyprian requests his readers to be alert to handwriting styles as a method of authenticating genuine letters against forgeries.¹¹⁸ Cyprian in particular utilized encyclical letters in order to inform a geographically broad group of his teachings and his pronouncements on various heresies and heretics.¹¹⁹ He attached previous letters to new ones, furthering their rhetorical force,¹²⁰ translated into Latin a Greek letter he received and desired to pass on,¹²¹ and even annotated another Christian’s

¹¹⁴ Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 10.

¹¹⁵ Fox, ‘Literacy,’ 130, 135, respectively.

¹¹⁶ Fox, ‘Literacy,’ 135.

¹¹⁷ Cyprian, *Epistle* 45.

¹¹⁸ Cyprian, *Epistle* 9 (Clarke, ACW), 2.2: ‘That we may know this, therefore, examine the handwriting and the concluding greetings to see whether they are yours and write back to us what is the truth of the matter.’

¹¹⁹ Fox, ‘Literacy,’ 136.

¹²⁰ Fox, ‘Literacy,’ 136.

¹²¹ Cyprian, *Epistle* 75.

letter in order to point out errors before circulating it.¹²² This use of literacy is an organization of power, simultaneously establishing the boundaries of the catholic Church and Cyprian as the boundary maker. It must, therefore, be defined separately from scribal literacy, and Fox labels it ‘convenient literacy.’¹²³

This is not to imply that scribal, or sacred, literacy was wholly unrelated to Cyprian’s use of convenient literacy, however, for ‘power exercised *over* texts allows power to be exercised *through* texts.’¹²⁴ Cyprian was only in a position to give an authoritative pronouncement because of the effects of scribal literacy, and he shows signs of consciousness of his position and responsibility. He claims that when leaders go astray and commit ‘false rumour and lying reports’ to text, ‘It is the manifest duty of us bishops, God’s appointed leaders, to make every effort to repudiate such insinuations whenever they are written.’¹²⁵ It was the responsibility of bishops because they were the leaders, but more importantly because they were some of the few capable of responding; that is, capable of reading the false report and writing a rebuttal. In an earlier context, Ignatius (early second century CE) also demonstrates the responsibility of bishops to communicate via writing. At the end of his epistle to Polycarp he instructs Polycarp, in his capacity as bishop, to write to the Christian communities that Ignatius has not been able to reach: ‘Since I have not been able to write to all the churches . . . you must write, as one possessing the mind of God, to the churches on this side.’¹²⁶

Furthermore, Christianity, above all, was a textual community, with both the Hebrew Scriptures and the writings of the apostles at the core of their existence. And, as Chapter Four observed, in any text-dominated culture, power will always be the property of those capable of accessing the text. By the middle of the second century, Justin Martyr claims in his *First Apology* that in Christian worship services ‘the memoirs of the apostles or the writing of the prophets are read, as long as there is time.’¹²⁷ By Cyprian’s time these texts were not just the core of Christian liturgy,

¹²² Cyprian, *Epistle* 74.

¹²³ Fox, ‘Literacy,’ 129.

¹²⁴ Bowman and Woolf, ‘Literacy and Power,’ 8 (emphases original).

¹²⁵ Cyprian, *Epistle* 45, 2.3 (Clarke, ACW).

¹²⁶ Ign., *Pol.* 8.1 (Holmes).

¹²⁷ Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 67 (Falls, FC).

but, perhaps more importantly, a repository of ammunition in the heated debates and schisms whose primary participants were bishops.¹²⁸ Augustine demonstrates this fact in his time as well: ‘And, if we make threats, let it be done sorrowfully, in the words of Scripture, and in terms of punishment in the world to come. In this way, it is not we who are feared because of our power, but God because of our words.’¹²⁹ Threats from Scripture (i.e., threats from bishops) are threats from God,¹³⁰ and thus the power of the bishops was founded on their access to those words—the weaponry could only be wielded by those qualified to use it. Cyprian himself also ‘drew on sacred literacy to build up a consensus which could then be paraded against opponents.’¹³¹ He reminds Donatus, ‘See that you observe either constant prayer or reading. Speak now with God; let God now speak with you. Let Him instruct in His precepts; let Him dispose you in them.’¹³² The vast majority of Christians could not read the Scriptures, though, and therefore had no opportunity for God to speak with them. Most Christians were dependent on their leaders for access to the holy text, and this explains why bishops were expected to be literate.¹³³ Sacred literacy and convenient literacy were thus symbiotic in this context. Once in the position of bishop, Cyprian exploited convenient literacy to spread his ideas and thus his authority, as did Ambrose.

Ambrose became Bishop of Milan on December 7, 374 and maintained that position until his death on April 4, 397.¹³⁴ At that time, Milan was the residence of emperors, and thus of critical importance for the church. Ambrose increased its importance by raising Milan to ‘the most important see in the West.’¹³⁵ He

¹²⁸ Kannaday, *Apologetic Discourse*, 21, runs with the metaphor in reference to pagan criticisms: ‘The text of the New Testament was in a potential sense an ammunition magazine, a common store of gunpowder and musket balls critical to victory in the campaign being waged by both pagan intellectuals and apologetic defenders. As such it was also a battleground.’

¹²⁹ Augustine, *Epistle* 22 (Parsons, FC).

¹³⁰ Fox, ‘Literacy,’ 138, states: ‘In Christian circles, literacy . . . drew on the power of an irreplaceable text: the scriptures, in which, it was accepted, God spoke to men.’

¹³¹ Fox, ‘Literacy,’ 139.

¹³² Cyprian, *Don.* 15 (Deferrari, FC).

¹³³ Fox, ‘Literacy,’ 135; Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 9.

¹³⁴ Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (BiAC; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1045. Mary Melchior Beyenka, introduction to *St. Ambrose Letters 1–91* (FC 26; Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1954), v, dates his consecration to December 1, 373.

¹³⁵ Beyenka, introduction, vii.

accomplished this by several methods, of which the most important for the present study is the letters he wrote. Ambrose corresponded with emperors, synod members, family members, priests, and laymen. More than any other group, however, Ambrose corresponded with other bishops,¹³⁶ and in his epistles he demonstrates the same tendency noted in Cyprian and Augustine previously. He constantly refers back to the Scriptures in order to provide an answer to a current problem his addressee is facing. One example of this is Ambrose's *Epistle* 62 (19) (ca. 385 CE). Addressed to the newly appointed bishop Vigilus, Ambrose begins, 'You have asked me what should be the chief points of your teaching now that you are newly ordained to the office of bishop.'¹³⁷ Ambrose then proceeds to instruct Vigilus on his need to avoid causing scandal for the church and provides scriptural support for his instructions: 'For this reason, *Scripture says to you*: "Do not marry any Chanaanite woman but go into Mesopotamia, to the house of Bathuel, that is, the house of wisdom, and choose there a wife for you."'¹³⁸ An allegorical interpretation of Genesis 28.1–2 follows whereby Ambrose brings the passage to bear on Vigilus' current context. Note, however, that Ambrose confirms and furthers his authority when *he* chooses and states *which* Scripture is speaking *directly* to Vigilus (scribal literacy) *and* communicates this information via *Epistle* 62 (19) (convenient literacy). Ambrose handles other questions and issues similarly in his correspondences, and as will be recalled, this is exactly the context in which Ambrose employs PA in *Epistle* 50 (25) and *Epistle* 68 (26).

One could cite many more examples beyond Cyprian and Ambrose. Their literary activities are sufficient enough, however, to demonstrate the manner in which, for bishops such as themselves in the third and fourth centuries, literacy was not only crucial to their attainment of the position but also their continued power.

3.2.2 *Jesus—the Paradigm of a Literate Teacher/Leader*

For bishops and other Christian leaders, therefore, the benefits of a literate education became a prerequisite for the position, at least in urban areas. Furthermore, this chapter has already observed the manner in which the *Didascalía*, Didymus the Blind, Ambrose, and Augustine cite PA as a paradigm for bishops and

¹³⁶ Beyenka, introduction, ix.

¹³⁷ Beyenka, FC.

¹³⁸ Beyenka, FC (emphasis added).

other leaders, both prior to and following its insertion into GJohn. Ignatius also demonstrates the conflation of Jesus' roles as primary teacher and example in early Christianity: not only is Jesus the 'only teacher' (τὸν/ μόνον διδάσκαλον); he is also the 'only bishop,' at least of the Syrian Church.¹³⁹ I here suggest, therefore, that—as Christian leaders continued to look to Jesus as their paradigm as both leaders/bishops and teachers—the interpolator inserted PA into GJohn in order to ensure that the authoritative image of Jesus found within the fourfold collection included the skill of grapho-literacy, the highest literary ability in the Greco-Roman world.¹⁴⁰ His efforts at portraying Jesus as a literate, educated teacher reflect a broader current begun in the first century but underscored and solidified in second- and third-century Christianity and continuing beyond. This trend of demonstrating Jesus' superiority as a teacher in literate terms¹⁴¹ is already present in the Gospel of Luke, John 7.15, and Revelation 1–3, but continues and is made even more explicit in the Ignatian epistles (early second century CE), writings of Clement of Alexandria (second to third century CE), *Inf. Gos. Thom.*, Jesus' letter to Abgar the Toparch (accepted by Eusebius in third to fourth century CE), iconographic representations of Jesus on sarcophagi (fourth century CE), and *Dialogue of Adamantius* and *Demonstrations of Aphrahat* (both fourth century CE). Since Chapter Six discussed John 7.15 extensively, it will serve merely as a touchstone here.

3.2.2.1 Luke 2.45–50 and 4.16–22

The end of Luke 2 narrates Joseph, Mary, and Jesus' annual trip to Jerusalem for Passover. After realizing they had left their son in Jerusalem, Joseph and Mary find him several days later in the temple 'sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions' (Luke 2.46, NRSV).¹⁴² Most importantly for present purposes, however, Luke portrays Jesus as no ordinary Jewish boy listening

¹³⁹ Ign., *Magn.* 9.1; *Rom.* 9.1, respectively.

¹⁴⁰ The importance of the fourfold collection will receive more attention below.

¹⁴¹ I use the phrase 'in literate terms' because these texts usually fail to attribute direct literate abilities to Jesus. The consistent portrayal of Jesus is that he demonstrates the 'intangible effects' of a literate education (powerful teacher, gifted debater, member of elite culture), mostly demonstrated through speaking, without ever having to demonstrate the 'tangible effects' (actually reading or writing). Luke 4.16–22 (possibly) and PA are the exceptions.

¹⁴² I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 127: 'Here alone does Luke use *dida, skaloj* for Jewish teachers.'

to the rabbis. First, in line with the conclusions of Chapter Three, one should note that ‘ordinary’ Jewish boys did not study with rabbis at all. If this text reflects any historical reality, one can safely assume that Jesus’ experience was not a common one for Nazareth twelve year-olds. Second, according to Luke, Jesus sits *among* them (evn me, sw| tw/n didaska, lwn; ‘in the midst of the teachers’). Jesus is not merely absorbing the discussion, memorizing various sayings and positions, but rather is an active participant. He impresses all present with a knowledge that is clearly unexpected of a twelve year-old: ‘All who heard him were amazed (evxi, stanto) at his understanding and his answers’ (Luke 2.47, NRSV). Luke is likely employing a common *topos* here, as one can compare Josephus’ claim that when he was fourteen the leaders of the city came to confer with him on issues of the law given his great learning.¹⁴³ Though his claim is made with no small amount of hubris, Josephus, too, considers a child in such a position as exceptional.

Luke 2.45–50 does not directly attribute any literary status to Jesus, but that does not mean it is unrelated to such a claim. Since Luke pictures Jesus *in the temple*, the most natural assumption is that Jesus and the teachers are discussing the law. Luke thus portrays Jesus as being able to amaze the teachers—who would have been educated/literate—with only his understanding (sune, sei) and answers (avpokri, sesin). That is, Jesus is capable of participating in a discussion that likely depended on knowledge gained through education even though he presumably was not educated himself. Though a different verb (evxi, sthmi instead of qauma, zw), this is the same reaction that Jesus’ teaching produces in John 7.15, where ‘the Jews’ are ‘amazed’ by Jesus’ teaching, which they acknowledge as indicative of education. Thus, though Marshall is correct that ‘there is no thought of his precociously teaching the experts’ as in, e.g., *Inf. Gos. Thom.* (see below), he is perhaps mistaken that Luke portrays Jesus as a pupil.¹⁴⁴ While the narrative does emphasize Jesus’ youth in Luke 2.43 (by describing him as o` pai/j), it does not present him as an inferior member of the discussion.¹⁴⁵ The surprise of the teachers derives from their assumption that Jesus would be inferior, an assumption that the boy Jesus (and Luke) proves to the contrary.

¹⁴³ Josephus, *Vita* 9.

¹⁴⁴ Marshall, *Gospel of Luke*, 127–8 (quotation from p.128).

¹⁴⁵ Also, Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 155n.10: ‘Nothing in this text serves to portray Jesus as a *pupil*’ (emphasis original).

Luke 4.16–22 also portrays Jesus’ ability to amaze (Luke 4.22, here *qauima*, *zw* as in John 7.15) with his words (cf. Mark 6.1–6¹⁴⁶), though this story connects his teaching more directly with literacy than Luke 2.45–50. Foster claims, ‘This text is the strongest piece of evidence in the New Testament for seeing Jesus as possessing some level of functional literacy.’¹⁴⁷ According to 4.16, Jesus goes into the Nazareth synagogue and stands to read. Verse 17 then claims that Jesus opens the scroll and finds the passage, then in verse 20 he rolls the scroll up and hands it to the attendant. Contrary to, e.g., John 7.15, Jesus’ literacy in Luke 4.16 is not a direct concern of the narrative but rather a passing remark, with the significance being *what* Jesus reads (Isaiah 61.1–2a with 58.6) instead of *that* he reads.¹⁴⁸ The response of amazement in the crowd at verse 22 is the result of his proclamation in verse 21, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’ (NRSV). Two things are notable in this passage. First, Luke shows Jesus to be familiar with texts and thus implies that Jesus is a member of literate culture. One can safely assume that the vast majority of Nazarenes in worship that day would not have been able to open a scroll and find a passage in the *scriptio continua* (likely Hebrew) text, and most certainly not read it publicly, which is the clear implication of 4.21.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, one can also assume that Luke’s audience was aware of this fact, as most of them would not have fared better. To claim that Jesus was able to do these things is a significant claim, then, and surprisingly several major commentaries on Luke’s Gospel completely ignore the social implications of this separation (as well as the fact this is the only place where Jesus is said to handle a text in the Gospels).¹⁵⁰ Second, however, despite the fact that the *implication* of the scripture being fulfilled

¹⁴⁶ Marshall, *Gospel of Luke*, 179: ‘For many scholars the present narrative is due to Lucan redaction of Mk. 6:1–6.’

¹⁴⁷ Foster, ‘Educating Jesus,’ 12.

¹⁴⁸ A related difference is that, in the Johannine narrative, Jesus’ Galilean origin and educational background are in considerable conflict. In the Lukan narrative, however, they appear harmonious, as Jesus does in his hometown what was his custom (το. εἰς τὸν τόπον αὐτοῦ) elsewhere—he reads publicly in the synagogue on the Sabbath.

¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, they were likely dependent upon an Aramaic translation. See, e.g., Darrel L. Bock, *Luke Vol.1: 1.1–9.50* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 403; Marshall, *Gospel of Luke*, 181.

¹⁵⁰ Some who ignore the implications of Jesus’ public reading are Bock, *Luke Vol.1: 1.1–9.50*; Green, *Gospel of Luke*; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (SP 3; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991); Marshall, *Gospel of Luke*; John Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20* (WBC 35a; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989).

in the audience's 'hearing' (evn toi/j wvsi, n) is that Jesus read the Hebrew Bible passage (as well as the fact that reading in the ancient world was normally done orally¹⁵¹), Luke never actually narrates Jesus' reading of the text.¹⁵² In 4.16, Jesus stands in order to read (avnagnw/nai), but 4.18–19 technically narrates what is written on the scroll,¹⁵³ not what Jesus says. This possibly means that, though Luke believes Jesus was capable of reading, he stops short of claiming that he actually did. Luke's desire to portray Jesus' teaching authority in literate terms, however, is clear.

Luke 2.45–50 and 4.16–22, like John 7.15, demonstrate that already in the first century Christians recognized that Jesus' teaching was indicative of an educated status and sought to portray him as an authoritative teacher. Significantly, however, portraying Jesus as such appears to be a 'tight-rope act' for these authors. Luke 2.45–50 claims the boy Jesus amazes educated teachers, but does not claim that he himself was educated. Similarly, John 7.15 claims not that Jesus was educated or 'knew letters,' but rather that this was the Jewish leadership's deduction from hearing Jesus' teaching. Luke 4.16–22, too, portrays Jesus as capable of reading but does not (technically) claim he did, and asserts that the crowd was amazed based upon what he said. The common denominator between these traditions and others is that those who heard Jesus teach were astounded by his abilities. He is able to demonstrate the intangible effects of one who has been trained. The fact that Jesus is consistently portrayed as being capable of teaching like the recognized authorities, though he is not one, may reflect early Christian conviction that Jesus was not himself literate.¹⁵⁴ However, even if Luke 4.16–22 should be interpreted as a claim

¹⁵¹ Achtemeier, 'Omne,' 16–17, notes that Ambrose's silent reading in the fourth century CE was considered unusual. Achtemeier may misinterpret the evidence, however, and certainly goes too far in claiming that all reading in the ancient world was oral; see Frank D. Gilliard, 'More Silent Reading in Antiquity: *non omne verbum sonabat*,' *JBL* 112.4 (1993): 689–96; William A. Johnson, 'Toward a Sociology of Reading in Classical Antiquity,' *AJP* 121 (2000): 593–600.

¹⁵² See Hugh S. Pyper, 'Jesus Reads the Scriptures,' in *Those Outside*, 1–16.

¹⁵³ On whether Luke portrays Jesus as reading a scroll or a codex, see Roger S. Bagnall, 'Jesus Reads a Book,' *JTS* 51 (2000): 577–88, who views the variant avnoi, xaj (opening a scroll) as original and avnaptu, xaj as later and a reflection of early Christian adoption of the codex.

¹⁵⁴ Similarly, consider Luke's portrayal of Peter and John in Acts 4.13. The Jewish leadership observe that the parrhsi, a of the apostles stands in contradistinction to their lack of formal training. Hilton, 'Dumb Speak,' 235–6: 'While Peter and John's parrhsi, a is indeed offered as a commodity for rhetorical exchange, a token that compensates for their lack of education, it is explained and its source is identified in theological terms' (emphasis added).

that Jesus was capable of public reading, one should recall from Chapter Three that compositional writing was a still more advanced literate skill.

3.2.2.2 *Revelation 1–3*

Revelation 1–3 presents the risen Christ as the source of the seven letters to the seven churches in the opening of the Apocalypse, against the backdrop of Old Testament images of Yahweh speaking divine oracles to the prophets. A departure from that Old Testament image, which may be relevant for the present suggestion, is that Revelation 1–3 modifies this image by presenting the Risen Christ as the author of the letters. The text does not claim that Jesus writes the letters himself, however, but Jesus instead authors the letters to the churches through the amanuensis John. This is perhaps the most salient example of the social value of literacy in the early church. That Jesus has an amanuensis speaks to the perceived value of the letters and the perceived status of Jesus. Jesus here joins the ranks of elite members of society who are either wealthy enough or important enough to avoid the menial task of writing.

3.2.2.3 *Jesus the Only Teacher—Ignatius (early second century CE¹⁵⁵) and Clement of Alexandria (second to third century CE)*

In Matthew 23.8, Jesus instructs the disciples not to refer to each other as rabbi, ‘for one is your teacher’ (ei-j ga, r evstin u`mw/n o` dida, skaloj). Ignatius and Clement of Alexandria develop this thinking into full assertions that Jesus is the ‘only teacher’ of the Church and the source of all wisdom.¹⁵⁶ Though neither directly attribute to Jesus the skills of reading or writing, they remain relevant to the present study since the implicit claim of Jesus being the ‘only teacher’ is that Christians have no direct need for worldly teachers or knowledge.

Ignatius claims that Jesus is the ‘one teacher’ (ei-j ... dida, skaloj),¹⁵⁷ i.e., the ‘only teacher’ (tou/ mo, nou didaska, lou).¹⁵⁸ For Ignatius, Jesus is the ‘only teacher’ because he is God himself, from whom

¹⁵⁵ Paul Foster, ‘The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch,’ in *Writings*, 88–89, is critical of the traditional dating ca. 110 CE and instead proposes 125–150 CE.

¹⁵⁶ See Byrskog, *Jesus*, 13.

¹⁵⁷ Ign. *Eph.* 15.1.

¹⁵⁸ Ign. *Magn.* 9.1.

wisdom comes.¹⁵⁹ One does not gain true knowledge via educational avenues, therefore, but rather by reception of Jesus. Thus, Ignatius asks, ‘Why do we not all become wise by receiving God’s knowledge, which is Jesus Christ?’¹⁶⁰ In light of earlier observations, it is also significant that Ignatius views ‘Jesus Christ alone’ (mo, noj ... vIhsou/ j Cristo, j) as the bishop of the Syrian Church and God as ‘bishop of all’ (tw| pa, ntw n evpisko, pw|).¹⁶¹ That is, for Ignatius—in the early- or mid-second century CE—Jesus’ status as supreme teacher and his status as supreme bishop are actually two sides of the same ecclesial coin. Jesus’ role as teacher emerges not from training or education, however, but rather from his status as ‘God’s knowledge.’

Slightly later than Ignatius, Clement of Alexandria too reflects the conviction that Jesus is the only true teacher.¹⁶² *Strom.* 6.58.2 affirms Matthew 23.8 and Clement devotes an entire work (*Paedagogus*) to the idea of ‘Christ the Educator.’¹⁶³ Elsewhere he claims that ‘the teacher is one’ (ei-j ga.r o` dida, skaloj),¹⁶⁴ that Christians have one teacher (e`noj didaska, lou) as they have one God,¹⁶⁵ and that Christ is ‘the teacher of all created beings’ (o` tw/n genhtw/n a`pa, ntw n dida, skaloj).¹⁶⁶ For Clement, Jesus’ status as the only teacher is not reflective of literate status, and thus one of his translators reminds readers that ‘Christ the Educator’ ‘refers only to an education of character.’¹⁶⁷ It is significant, however, that Clement chose to express Jesus’ role in pedagogical language.

¹⁵⁹ Ign. *Smyrn.* 1.1. Cf. *Magn.* 3.1.

¹⁶⁰ Ign. *Eph.* 17.2 (Holmes).

¹⁶¹ Ign. *Rom.* 9.1; *Magn.* 3.1, respectively.

¹⁶² See Byrskog, *Jesus*, 13–14, and throughout. Byrskog is especially concerned with the Matthean community.

¹⁶³ Byrskog, *Jesus*, 14n.3, notes other allusions to Matthew 23.8 in Clement’s writings.

¹⁶⁴ Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.12.3.

¹⁶⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 5.98.1.

¹⁶⁶ Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.58.1.

¹⁶⁷ Simon P. Wood, introduction to *Christ the Educator*, by Clement of Alexandria (FC 23; Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1954), xiv.

3.2.2.4 *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (late second century CE¹⁶⁸)

Inf. Gos. Thom. provides an image of a Jesus with no need for the normal avenues of literate education. In *Inf. Gos. Thom.*, one finds a significant departure from the first-century texts discussed above. The Gospels of Luke and John both reflect Jesus' superior teaching skills, described with reference to literate skills, as situated within a Palestinian Jewish milieu. *Inf. Gos. Thom.*, however, situates its claims for a 'supraliterate' Jesus predominantly in a Greco-Roman classroom, with Jesus being the pupil of frustrated private tutors.¹⁶⁹ Cullmann observes aptly, 'What Luke relates relatively soberly about the twelve-year-old in the temple is here exaggerated into the grotesque.'¹⁷⁰ Jesus is here short-tempered and tends to use his abilities for mischief, but the particular emphasis is that Jesus was beyond human categories even as a child, and especially in the category of knowledge.¹⁷¹

After Jesus kills one boy for draining water, another for bumping into him, and blinds the villagers who accuse him,¹⁷² Joseph confronts Jesus with Jesus threatening back, 'Don't make me upset.'¹⁷³ Hearing this, Zacchaeus the teacher instructs Joseph to bring Jesus to him. Zacchaeus claims that Jesus is unruly because he has not yet been educated. He says, 'You have a bright child, and he has a good mind. Hand him over to me so he can learn his letters.'¹⁷⁴ Jesus, however, laughs at this offer and, in 6.6b–8, says, 'If you wish to be a perfect teacher, listen to me and I'll teach you a wisdom that no one else knows except for me and the one who sent me to you. It's you that happens to be my student, and I know how old you are and how long you have to live' (Hock). Like Ignatius and Clement of Alexandria, this

¹⁶⁸ Foster, 'Educating Jesus,' 22(n.84), notes the problems with dating *Inf. Gos. Thom.*, whose earliest manuscripts are from the Middle Ages. Cullmann, 'Infancy Gospels,' 1.442, and Hock, 'Infancy Gospel of Thomas,' 369–70, note that second-century Irenaeus seems to know a version of the 'alpha-beta logion' found in *Inf. Gos. Thom.* and attributes it to apocryphal tradition. According to Cullmann, 'It thus probably belongs towards the end of the 2nd century.'

¹⁶⁹ For an English translation, see Hock, trans., 'Infancy Gospel of Thomas' in *Complete Gospels*, 371–9.

¹⁷⁰ Cullmann, 'Infancy Gospels,' 1.442.

¹⁷¹ Surprisingly, Cullmann, 'Infancy Gospels,' 1.439–43, fails to note the degree to which *Inf. Gos. Thom.* portrays Jesus' superiority in terms of literacy, though he does state, 'Not only the miracle-worker but also Christ the teacher must be foreshadowed in the child' (1.442).

¹⁷² *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 3.3, 4.2, 5.2, respectively. Here and below I will use the versification and translation of Hock.

¹⁷³ *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 5.6 (Hock).

¹⁷⁴ *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 6.2 (Hock).

passage sees Jesus as the only true teacher, who possesses a form of knowledge or wisdom that one cannot gain apart from him. Zacchaeus presses on, however, eventually writing out the alphabet and asking Jesus to repeat the first letter, alpha. Jesus remains silent, and so Zacchaeus strikes him on the head. Jesus reminds the teacher again of his inferiority by stating that he already knows the alphabet and that Zacchaeus has just brought condemnation upon himself by striking Jesus.¹⁷⁵ As punctuation, Jesus ‘recited the letters from alpha to omega very quickly.’¹⁷⁶ Jesus does not stop there, however, in pressing the point of his superior knowledge. He informs Zacchaeus that he is an ‘imposter’ and does not yet know the real nature of alpha—‘Teach me first the letter alpha and then I’ll trust you with the letter beta.’¹⁷⁷ (This tradition, known variously in ancient Christianity, is thus called the ‘Alpha-Beta logion.’¹⁷⁸) Zacchaeus, however, is ‘unable to say anything’ and Jesus proceeds to interpret alpha allegorically.¹⁷⁹

This text’s inverted student-teacher power structure reaches its zenith when Zacchaeus asks for Jesus to be taken away, confesses that Jesus is eternal, states that he (Zacchaeus) has lost his mind, and eventually says, ‘I strove to get a student, and I’ve been found to have a teacher . . . I’ve been defeated by a small child.’¹⁸⁰ Jesus has here demonstrated his supraliteracy. His knowledge exceeds that which lettered writing can contain, and thus when Zacchaeus attempts to teach him the alphabet, he is rewarded with shame.

Zacchaeus is not the only teacher in *Inf. Gos. Thom.* who encounters Jesus’ intellect and leaves defeated. In chapter fourteen, Joseph decides that Jesus ‘should not remain illiterate’ after seeing how intelligent he was for his age.¹⁸¹ The teacher to whom Joseph takes Jesus decides to teach Jesus the biblical languages, starting with Greek and then Hebrew.¹⁸² (*Pseudo-Matthew* 31 contains the Alpha-Beta logion from *Inf. Gos. Thom.* but has the teacher set out to teach Jesus Hebrew first,

¹⁷⁵ *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 6.16.

¹⁷⁶ *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 6.18 (Hock).

¹⁷⁷ *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 6.20 (Hock).

¹⁷⁸ Foster, ‘Educating Jesus,’ 22.

¹⁷⁹ *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 6.21 (Hock).

¹⁸⁰ *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 7.3–8 (Hock).

¹⁸¹ *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 14.1 (Hock).

¹⁸² *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 14.2.

then Greek in verse 38.¹⁸³) Jesus repeats to this teacher his taunt to Zacchaeus: ‘If you’re really a teacher, and if you know the letters well, tell me of the letter alpha, and I’ll tell you the meaning of beta.’¹⁸⁴ This teacher also strikes Jesus on the head and, apparently having had enough, Jesus curses him and kills the man in 14.4!

In chapter fifteen, an unnamed teacher who is a friend of Joseph offers to ‘teach [Jesus] his letters.’¹⁸⁵ As with Zacchaeus, Jesus displays his supraliteracy, but this time it is not through an allegorical interpretation of the alphabet but via the Law: ‘Jesus strode boldly into the schoolroom and found a book lying on the desk. He took the book but did not read the letters in it. Rather, he opened his mouth and spoke by (the power of) the holy spirit and taught the law to those standing there.’¹⁸⁶ This teacher, in contrast to the previous two, is impressed with Jesus, as is a large crowd that has gathered in astonishment to listen to him. The teacher tells Joseph, ‘Brother . . . already he’s full of grace and wisdom.’¹⁸⁷ Upon hearing this, Jesus commends the teacher and even restores the previous teacher to life. Note, however, that Jesus here does not need to read the law in order to teach it. The Holy Spirit powers his eloquence.

Inf. Gos. Thom. ends with a twelve year old Jesus in Jerusalem. The setting parallels the Lukan account of Jesus in the Temple. ‘Everyone was astounded that he, a mere child, could interrogate the elders and teachers of the people and explain the main points of the law and the parables of the prophets.’¹⁸⁸ The text shows Jesus teaching from lettered writing (Luke 2.45–50 does not specifically mention the law as the point of discussion), and astounding the crowd because he is so advanced.

Therefore, in *Inf. Gos. Thom.*, Joseph’s attempts at gaining the child Jesus a literate education is part of the conflict that drives the narrative. This literary device

¹⁸³ Noted by Foster, ‘Educating Jesus,’ 25. For text, see Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 90–91. Cullmann, ‘Infancy Gospels,’ 1.458, dates *Ps.-Mt.* to the eighth or ninth century. Consider, however, the recent estimation of Jan Gijssels, *Libri de Nativitate Mariae: Pseudo-Matthei Evangelium Textus et Commentarius* (CCSA 9; Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 67: ‘Il est certain que le *Pseudo-Matthieu* a été rédigé entre le milieu du VI^e siècle et les dernières décennies du VIII^e siècle, et il est probable qu’il a vu le jour dans le premier quart du VII^e siècle.’

¹⁸⁴ *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 14.3 (Hock).

¹⁸⁵ *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 15.1 (Hock).

¹⁸⁶ *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 15.3 (Hock).

¹⁸⁷ *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 15.6 (Hock).

¹⁸⁸ *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 19.5 (Hock).

demonstrates Jesus' supraliteracy, and thus his lack of need for such an education. Significantly, all the examples demonstrate Jesus' superiority vis-à-vis alphabetized letters, a slight departure from previous portrayals of Jesus' teaching superiority.

3.2.2.5 *The Letter of Jesus to Abgar the Toparch* (late third century CE¹⁸⁹)

The next example of a literate Jesus in early Christianity is perhaps the most interesting of all and has been called 'the most powerful piece of Christian literacy.'¹⁹⁰ According to Elliot, it 'represents the only example of a text written in Jesus' name,' but this discounts the fact that the epistles to the seven churches in Revelation 1–3 claim to be from Jesus.¹⁹¹ Nonetheless, the 'Abgar Legend' claims grapho-literacy for Jesus.

In the first book of his *Hist. eccl.*, Eusebius contains the earliest known account of the 'Abgar Legend' as part of his discussion of Thaddeus, whom he claims was one of the apostles of Jesus.¹⁹² Eusebius records, 'King Abgar, the celebrated monarch of the nations beyond the Euphrates, [was] perishing from terrible suffering in his body, beyond human power to heal.'¹⁹³ When Abgar heard about Jesus' miraculous abilities, he sent a letter to Jesus asking for healing. Eusebius states, 'Jesus did not heed to his request at the time, yet vouchsafed him a letter of his own, promising to send one of his disciples for the cure of his disease.'¹⁹⁴ Eusebius not only claims that Thaddeus (Addai in Syriac) went to Abgar at the behest of Thomas, following Jesus' resurrection, but also claims to provide the

¹⁸⁹ H. J. W. Drijvers, 'The Abgar Legend,' in *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1.494, 496. Kevin P. Sullivan and T. G. Wilfong, 'The Reply of Jesus to King Abgar: A Coptic New Testament Apocryphon Reconsidered (P. Mich. Inv. 6213),' *BASP* 42 (2005): 109–10, claim that it is difficult to date the Abgar Legend with any more precision than 'between 100–300 C.E.' Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (eds. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel; trans. Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 11, says the Abgar legend 'need not have emerged earlier than the beginning of the fourth century.' For a full discussion, see J. B. Segal, *Edessa: 'The Blessed City'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 62–81.

¹⁹⁰ Fox, 'Literacy,' 140.

¹⁹¹ J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal Jesus: Legends of the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 64.

¹⁹² Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.13 (Lake, LCL). See Drijvers, 'Abgar Legend,' 1.493. Sullivan and Wilfong, 'Reply of Jesus,' 110, note: 'It is clear that after Eusebius' account the Abgar legend spread widely in the Christian world, since versions of the story have survived in Syriac, Greek, Latin, Armenian, Arabic, and Coptic.'

¹⁹³ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.13.2 (Lake, LCL).

¹⁹⁴ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.13.3 (Lake, LCL).

correspondence between Abgar and Jesus, which he translates from Syriac (ܐܘܬܝܬܝܢ ܫܘܪܝܢ ܒܦܢܗܝܝܢ)!¹⁹⁵ (Drijvers posits that the Abgar Legend was originally Syriac, then translated into Greek.¹⁹⁶) According to Eusebius, Jesus wrote the following to Abgar the Toparch:

Blessed art thou who didst believe in me not having seen me, for it is written concerning me that those who have seen me will not believe on me, and that those who have not seen me will believe and live. Now concerning what you wrote to me, to come to you, I must first complete here all for which I was sent, and after thus completing it be taken up to him who sent me, and when I have been taken up, I will send to you one of my disciples to heal your suffering, and give life to you and those with you.¹⁹⁷

Like the Jesus of Revelation 1–3, this is an epistolary Jesus, except that the text does not mention an amanuensis. Though the version of the Abgar Legend that appears in *Doctrina Addai* (ca. fifth century) has Jesus dictate to a certain Hanan,¹⁹⁸ the Eusebian account leaves open the possibility that Jesus wrote this letter with his own hand.¹⁹⁹ If this is the case, then ‘the Reply of Jesus to King Agbar is unique among ancient literary sources about Jesus in its claim to have been *written* by Jesus himself.’²⁰⁰ It was apparently the hand of the Johannine Jesus that wrote Abgar’s letter, given the similarities to John 20.29 (‘Blessed are those who did not see me, and believed’) and the reference to God as ‘the one who sent me’ (see John 6.38–39). The Jesus of this letter is also a pre-resurrection Jesus—despite the fact that it is already written that those who have not seen Jesus will believe in him—who is very busy with his ministry and thus cannot at this time come to see Abgar. The important point for the present study, however, is that, though modern critics may have trouble with the veracity of this letter, Eusebius clearly did not. Eusebius quite explicitly accepted that Jesus himself had indeed written the letter and states that his

¹⁹⁵ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.13.5 (Lake, LCL).

¹⁹⁶ Drijvers, ‘Abgar Legend,’ 1.493.

¹⁹⁷ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.13.10 (Lake, LCL).

¹⁹⁸ Drijvers, ‘Abgar Legend,’ 1.494–5.

¹⁹⁹ Drijvers, ‘Abgar Legend,’ 1.495, posits further, ‘The original form of the legend knew two letters. The transformation of a letter of Jesus into an oral but written answer can be explained on dogmatic grounds: Christ wrote nothing.’ If this is the case, it strengthens the suggestion that the Eusebian version portrays Jesus himself as the author.

²⁰⁰ Sullivan and Wilfong, ‘Reply of Jesus,’ 122 (emphasis original). Sullivan and Wilfong fail to note the significance of claiming that Jesus could write in a predominantly illiterate culture.

readers could access it in the archives at Edessa. Amongst other things, then, Eusebius believed that Jesus was educated enough to be capable of writing a personal letter. Even further, Eusebius presents Jesus as literate in Syriac!²⁰¹

3.2.2.6 Iconographic Representations of a Literate Jesus (fourth century CE)

In the same manner that Eusebius believed Jesus was a member of literate culture, several fourth-century sarcophagi contain images of Jesus holding a scroll. Three such sarcophagi are from the Vatican Museum and their images are included at the end of this chapter.²⁰² One portrays various scenes from the Gospels, including Zacchaeus in the tree and Jesus' healing of the man born blind. In the very centre of the carving is an image of Jesus with his right hand held in the air in the traditional teaching pose, and his left hand grasping a scroll. A second sarcophagus includes Jesus' healing of the man born blind as well, with Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac to the left. With his right hand on the eyes of the diminutive blind man, Jesus holds a scroll in his left hand. Similarly, a third sarcophagus pictures Jesus enthroned in heaven with his disciples. Here too Jesus is holding a scroll in his left hand, though this scroll is unrolled.²⁰³ These three images are by no means unique in early Christian representations of Jesus, as Natanson includes carvings of gospel scenes dated from the fourth to the sixth century where Jesus is holding a scroll or, in one case, a codex.²⁰⁴

For the Christians responsible for these images, in a context where educated, authoritative teachers were portrayed with scroll in hand,²⁰⁵ it was unquestionable that Jesus too, as a powerful teacher, would have been educated and carried a scroll

²⁰¹ Eusebius does not state explicitly that Jesus' letter was written in Syriac. This inference is based upon the fact that he does state that Abgar's correspondence was written in Syriac, a short note after Jesus' response was written in Syriac, and that the evidence of this correspondence is all found in the same location.

²⁰² The pictures are from Robin M. Jensen, 'The Economy of the Trinity at the Creation of Adam and Eve,' *J ECS* 7.4 (1999): 527–46. Cited 28 May 2007. Online: http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_early_christian_studies/v007/7.4jensen_fig05.html.

²⁰³ Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 146, entitles this image 'Christ and the authority of the book-roll.'

²⁰⁴ Natanson, *Early Christian Ivories*, figures 2, 10, 12 (two—Water into Wine and Sending of Legion into the Pigs), 28, 50 (codex). Graydon F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life Before Constantine* (Mercer: Mercer University Press, 1985), 61, mentions two other sarcophagi but does not seem certain that the teacher is Jesus.

²⁰⁵ Compare the relief of the philosopher with scroll in hand, speaking while students on either side are writing in codices, on the cover of Snyder, *Teachers*.

with him. Along with Eusebius' inclusion of Abgar's letter from Jesus, this evidence demonstrates that by the fourth century CE, most Christians simply assumed that Jesus was literate.

3.2.2.7 *Jesus as Author of the Gospel in the Dialogue (Adamantius) and Demonstrations (Aphrahat)* (fourth century CE)

The Greek *Dialogue On the True Faith in God* by Adamantius, which scholars date to the fourth century CE,²⁰⁶ claims that Jesus wrote the gospel (το εὐαγγέλιον). In the relevant portions of this text, Adamantius 'is the defender of orthodoxy' against Megethius and Marcus, who are Marcionites.²⁰⁷ During the course of the dialogue, both Marcus and Megethius claim that Jesus wrote the gospel.²⁰⁸ For example, Marcus claims that Peter did not write the gospel, but Christ did (Οὐκ ἐπεγράψεν, ἀλλ' ὁ Χριστός το εὐαγγέλιον).²⁰⁹ To my knowledge, the *Dialogue* is the only text other than PA that attaches *grā, fw* or its cognates to him (the Abgar legend in Eusebius avoids this).

The fourth-century Syriac *Demonstrations*, attributed to Aphrahat the Persian Sage, also makes explicit claims that Jesus was the author of gospel tradition (Baarda speculates that Aphrahat means the *Diatessaron* by 'gospel').²¹⁰ Aphrahat 'ascribes his quotations from the Gospel to the literary activity of Jesus himself' with phrases stating that, by writing gospel tradition, Jesus wrote to its readers, a fact Aphrahat has even his Jewish opponent acknowledge.²¹¹ Interestingly for the present argument, Baarda notes that Aphrahat also seems to think God is responsible for the gospel text.

²⁰⁶ Tjitze Baarda, *The Gospel Quotations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage* (2 vols.; Amsterdam: Krips, 1975), 325, dates the *Dialogue* to ca. 300 CE. Robert A. Pretty, introduction to *Dialogue on the True Faith in God*, by Adamantius (Gnostica 1; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 16–17, suggests between 290–300 CE. For a recent discussion of the composition date of the *Dialogue*, see Kenji Tsutsui, *Die Auseinandersetzung mit den Markioniten im Adamantios-Dialog: Ein Kommentar zu den Büchern I–II* (PTS 55; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 105–8. On p.108, Tsutsui dates the text between ca. 350–360/378 CE.

²⁰⁷ Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*, 325. See also Pretty, introduction to *Dialogue*, 6. Books 3–5 of the *Dialogue* feature the opponents Marinus and Drosius.

²⁰⁸ Adamantius, *Dialogue* 1.8, 2.13; cf. 2.14.

²⁰⁹ Adamantius, *Dialogue* 2.13; For Greek text, see Tsutsui, *Auseinandersetzung*, 331.

²¹⁰ Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*, 2 (on date), 324–6 (on Jesus as author and the *Diatessaron*).

²¹¹ Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*, 324–5.

The fact that God is mentioned as the author also of the Gospels *and* that Jesus has written the words of the Gospel calls for some explanation. Is there the same relation between God and Jesus in this regard as there was between God and Moses? Is God the auctor primarius, whereas Moses and Jesus are auctores secundarii? Is it possible that Aphrahat thought that Jesus himself had written the text of the Gospel to which he referred?²¹²

Earlier in his study, which focuses on the text of GJohn in the *Demonstrations*, Baarda suggests that Aphrahat was unaware of PA.²¹³ Intriguingly, however, the Johannine PA is the only gospel tradition where Jesus writes and, as this thesis has argued, the interpretive background of the writing is the divine authorship of the law (though I argued in Chapter Eight that Jesus is to be paralled with God rather than Moses). There is not enough evidence for surety, but Baarda may have been mistaken to think Aphrahat was ignorant of PA's grapho-literate Jesus. More importantly, Aphrahat joins Adamantius' *Dialogue* in providing explicit fourth-century claims that Jesus was an author capable of producing gospel narrative.

Though other references to Jesus and literacy could be cited,²¹⁴ these biblical and extrabiblical traditions demonstrate that early Christians sought to portray Jesus as an authoritative teacher in literate terms, and to varying degrees. Luke 2.45–50 asserts that, even as a child, Jesus could participate in a learned discussion on the law and amaze the teachers in Jerusalem. Luke 4.16 portrays Jesus as familiar with the scrolls of the Hebrew Scriptures and capable of public reading. Revelation 1–3 presents Jesus as the author of the letters to the seven churches, important enough to have an amanuensis. The Ignatian corpus, along with the writings of Clement of Alexandria, exacerbate the claim of Matthew 23.8 and insist that, for Christians, Jesus is the only true teacher. *Inf. Gos. Thom.* claims that Jesus had supernatural literacy as a child, what I described as supraliteracy. Eusebius apparently has no qualms about a literate Jesus and even includes a letter supposedly written by Jesus to King Abgar. Likewise, fourth-century sarcophagi contain iconographic images of Jesus holding a scroll and appearing as a Greco-Roman intellectual, while the

²¹² Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*, 325 (emphasis original).

²¹³ Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*, 125–6.

²¹⁴ Cf. *Barn.* 12.9–10, which claims Moses actually gave his instructions to write in a book to Jesus, not Joshua (cf. Exodus 17.4).

Dialogue of Adamantius and *Demonstrations of Aphrahat* consider Jesus to be the author of gospel tradition.

In light of this evidence, a literate Jesus is not a foreign concept to the early church, despite the fact that John 7.53–8.11 is the only portrayal of Jesus in the act of writing. However, it is noteworthy that the earlier traditions are less explicit than are the later ones, and I will return to this shortly.

4. Conclusion and Further Considerations on Date

PA's insertion into GJohn is plausibly explained against the background of the previously discussed Christian portrayals of Jesus as a literate teacher. As part of a broader trend in second- and third-century Christianity of portraying Jesus as an elite teacher, literate in every sense of the term, a scribe placed PA at John 7.53–8.11. The socio-historical context of the Christian scribe, feeling the stings of pagan criticisms of Christian illiteracy, mirrored the narrative context of PA, where Jesus' literacy is questioned, along with his identity, in John 7. A Jesus capable of the highest form of literate education in the ancient world would have been intrinsically valuable to Christians on at least two fronts. Christians such as Justin Martyr defended Christianity against the Jewish charge of apostasy by interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures. To Christians arguing in this manner, it would be significant that the Jesus of PA out-wits 'the scribes and the Pharisees' by commenting upon the Mosaic Law. More importantly, PA's Jesus demonstrates a scribal literacy that is both equal to the most learned of the Jewish scribes and simultaneously far surpasses them by evincing his status as divine author of the Decalogue. The (ca. early second century CE²¹⁵) *Epistle of Barnabas*, similarly embroiled in an interpretive battle with Judaism,²¹⁶ claims that Moses smashed the tablets of the Decalogue 'in order that the covenant of the beloved Jesus might be sealed in our heart.'²¹⁷ One would be hard-pressed to find a more succinct narrative incarnation of *Barnabas*' claim than PA. Not only does PA's Jesus demonstrate a superior 'interpretation' of Moses compared to the scribes and the Pharisee (and thus demonstrate the superiority of Christian interpretation of the Jewish scriptures compared to Jewish interpretation), but he

²¹⁵ Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 272; James Carleton Paget, 'The *Epistle of Barnabas*,' in *Writings*, 73–75.

²¹⁶ Paget, 'Epistle,' 78.

²¹⁷ *Barn.* 4.8 (Holmes).

does so with reference to the Decalogue. On a second front, to Christians such as Origen, who defended Christianity against the charge of illiteracy, the Jesus of PA shows that he has attained the highest degree of literacy possible.

Underscoring the speculative aspects of this proposal is the fact that Justin, *Barnabas*, and Origen do not quote PA or show any awareness of it. Furthermore, although the earliest interpreters of Jesus' writing in John 8.6, 8 stress his role as God the divine author²¹⁸ and posit that he was writing sins²¹⁹ or even biblical verses,²²⁰ none of these commentators cite PA specifically in support of the idea that Jesus was literate.²²¹ However, their silence in this regard does not disprove the hypothesis, and the specific claim here is that these Fathers represent the type of Christian with whom the grapho-literate Jesus of PA would have resonated—a literate Christian responding to Jewish and/or pagan criticisms, and likely for the benefit (also) of fellow Christians.

I suggest that a third front, intra-Christian battles over orthodoxy and early Christian writings, provided the catalyst for placing PA in GJohn specifically, as it was part of the fourfold gospel collection. Though space prohibits a full discussion, one must consider why the interpolator was not content to leave PA as independent oral tradition (or, possibly, as part of the *Gos. Heb.* where Eusebius claims to know it) and instead sought to include it in GJohn.²²² In this sense, it likely is not coincidence that the time at which text-critics suggest the manuscript tradition was most capable of being altered is also when the Synoptics and GJohn were arising as foundational texts for the orthodox or proto-orthodox image of Jesus.²²³ These

²¹⁸ Ambrose, *Spir.* 3.15; *Epistle* 68 (26); *Job* 4.5.20; Augustine, *Enarrat. Ps.* 102.11; *Trac. Ev. Jo.* 33.5.2; *Cons.* 4.17; cf. *Enarrat. Ps.* 50.8.

²¹⁹ Jerome, *Pelag.* 2.17.

²²⁰ Ambrose, *Epistle* 50 (25).

²²¹ Cf. Augustine, *Faust.* 28.4, where he discusses the possibility (and doubts) that Jesus left written tradition while attempting to discredit the Manichaean 'Epistle of Christ.' His reason for doubting that Jesus left such records is not that he was incapable, but that the Church surely would have preserved them.

²²² Heckel, *Vom Evangelium des Markus*, 136, overlooks this issue (and the evidence that the present study marshals in Chapter Five) when he considers John 7.53–8.11 PA's 'final resting place' (*Ruhestätte*) in fourfold tradition rather than its initial location. In line with the present thesis, however, Heckel posits the existence of the fourfold collection prior to PA's appearance in canonical gospel tradition.

²²³ Note that Irenaeus articulates his view of the fourfold collection (ca. 180 CE) in direct response to the Gnostic Marcion. See further here Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ* (London: SCM Press, 2000), 34–35.

phenomena are interrelated elements of second- and third-century efforts at the construction of Christian identity, and if a grapho-literate image of Jesus was to be of any use to orthodox or proto-orthodox Christians who viewed Jesus as the ultimate teacher/bishop and as a paradigm for their teachers/bishops, it needed to be in the recognized collection of texts. I thus consider it likely that the interpolator placed the pericope in GJohn following the rise of the fourfold collection, i.e., the mid-second century CE. As Chapters Six to Eight argued, the narrative of John 7–8 guided the interpolator’s choice of John 7.53–8.11 as the insertion location and therefore explains why the interpolator inserted PA *where he did in GJohn*. The (growing) importance of the fourfold collection, however, best explains why the interpolator wanted to place PA in GJohn at all.

Can one be more specific about PA’s inclusion date than a *terminus a quo* of ca. 150 CE and a *terminus ad quem* of ca. 350 CE? Bearing in mind the caveat stressed at the beginning of this chapter regarding the goal of the proposal being a plausible context rather than a certain one, several further relevant pieces of evidence may offer more clarity, or reinforce this broad date. At the very least, these issues provide points of departure for alternative suggestions.

4.1 Increasingly Overt Portrayals of a Literate Jesus

As briefly mentioned above, one can note a slight progression in portrayals of Jesus in literate terms, with the later traditions being more explicit about Jesus’ literary abilities. The first-century evidence from the Gospel of Luke and GJohn asserts that Jesus (and his followers) were capable of speaking/teaching *as if they were educated*, but does not claim directly that they were able to read or write (though the implication of Luke 4.16–20 is that he could read), nor does Revelation 1–3 even though it views Jesus as the author of the letters. Ignatius and Clement of Alexandria too are convinced of Jesus’ teaching abilities, but fail to define these strictly in terms of literate abilities. The *Inf. Gos. Thom.*, however, portrays Jesus as knowing the Greek alphabet intricately, with *Pseudo-Matthew* insisting knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet as well. Eusebius’ acceptance of the Letter of Jesus to Abgar reflects a conviction that Jesus could write (in Syriac), and the *Demonstrations* and *Dialogue* assume similarly regarding Jesus’ literate abilities. The fourth-century sarcophagi represent Jesus in the garb of a Hellenistic philosopher, with whom literate education would certainly be associated. The overt claim of PA that Jesus was able to write thus fits more naturally with the late second-/third-century claims

of *Inf. Gos. Thom.* and the Abgar Legend, and even later claims of the *Dialogue* and *Demonstrations*, than the first-century evidence of the canonical gospels.

4.2 *The Affinity Between Knowledge of PA in GJohn and Knowledge of Jesus' Writing*

The evidence concerning Ambrose and Jerome being the first Christian authors to comment upon Jesus' acts of writing in PA may suggest that PA's insertion is closer to the context of these fathers in the fourth century than, e.g., Papias in the early second century. Ambrose and Jerome know PA in GJohn *and* find Jesus' writing to be significant. While this actually provides information only on Ambrose and Jerome—not the interpolator—one must note that every Christian author who knows Jesus' writing in PA also knows PA in GJohn. That is (in the available evidence), of the multiple authors who know PA in extrabiblical tradition or fail to specify their source as GJohn as opposed to another gospel (e.g., Papias/Eusebius, Didymus the Blind, the *Didascalia*), not one mentions the writing of John 8.6, 8. This, obviously, does not prove that their version of PA did not include the writing, but it does prove that, if it did, they did not find it worth mentioning. Thus, patristic knowledge of Jesus' acts of writing in PA has an affinity with the version of PA in GJohn. PA's narrative reads smoothly if one omits John 8.6, 8, and the narrator seems to be the only one in the scene who cares about Jesus' writing. This raises the possibility that the interpolator added the acts of writing in John 8.6, 8 to the story. As mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, it is possible that the interpolator took an ancient and possibly authentic piece of tradition and added a few brush strokes—in the form of grapho-literacy—before placing it within GJohn. It is all the more important, then, to place this overt claim for grapho-literacy in the trajectory of Christian portrayals of Jesus in literate terms described above in order to find a time period when such an augmentation to previous Jesus tradition would be appropriate. In this light, it is possible that the reason that authors who encountered PA outside GJohn do not comment on Jesus' acts of writing is that PA did not contain John 8.6, 8 prior to its insertion into GJohn; but there is no way to prove this proposal.

4.3 *The Possibility that PA First Entered GJohn in a Latin-Influenced Environment*

The previous information and other evidence suggest a further affinity between PA's presence in GJohn and a Latin-influenced environment. The three earliest Christian authors to comment on Jesus' writing (Ambrose, Jerome, and

Augustine), also the three earliest authors to demonstrate knowledge of PA in GJohn, are all Latin Fathers. None of their Greek contemporaries mentions PA in GJohn²²⁴ and the earliest extant Greek manuscript to include PA (Codex D) is a Greek-Latin diglot ca. 400 CE.²²⁵ Jerome's knowledge of PA is particularly interesting here, since, in addition to his inclusion of PA in his Vulgate translation (384 CE) at John 7.53–8.11, he also claims that he knows several Greek and Latin manuscripts that include PA in GJohn.²²⁶ However, Jerome was a student of the Greek Father Didymus the Blind in the famed Alexandrian School, who mentions neither GJohn nor Jesus' writing when recounting his version of PA.²²⁷ Another student of Didymus, Rufinus, translated Eusebius' *Hist. eccl.* into Latin ca. 402–403 and substituted Papias' reference to a 'woman taken in many sins' with an 'adulterous woman' (*muliere adultera*), reflecting his conviction that Papias was indeed discussing PA.²²⁸ Thus, Didymus and his students were aware of PA. Yet, only Jerome notes the Johannine context and the act of writing.²²⁹ The explanation for why Didymus does not mention the writing and Jerome does *may* be that Jerome was unaware of Jesus' writing in PA until he encountered the Johannine version of the pericope (which included the writing) in one of the manuscripts he mentions in *Pelag.* 2.7; i.e., once he left Alexandria.

Though increasing the tentative nature of this suggestion, a Latin-influenced context for PA's insertion into a Greek manuscript of GJohn may be probable in light of further evidence from Jerome, Didymus, and the *Didascalia*. To reiterate succinctly, Jerome (1) knows PA, (2) in GJohn, and (3) mentions Jesus' writing;

²²⁴ And if Eusebius did know PA in GJohn, it is puzzling that he attributes it to *Gos. Heb.* instead.

²²⁵ Jens Schröter, 'Jesus and the Canon: The Early Jesus Traditions in the Context of the Origins of the New Testament Canon,' in *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory, and Mark* (eds. Richard A. Horsley, Jonathan A. Draper, and John Miles Foley; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 113, suggests PA was originally Latin and that Bezae may represent the earliest Greek version of PA. The intertwined nature of Greek and Latin was present in the Latin manuscript tradition from its inception. Metzger, *Early Versions*, 286: 'The roots of the Old Latin version(s) are doubtless to be found in the practice of the double reading of holy Scripture during divine services, first in the Greek text . . . then in the vernacular tongue.'

²²⁶ Jerome, *Pelag.* 2.17.

²²⁷ Didymus the Blind, *EcclT*, 223.6–13. For text, see Ehrman, *Didymus*, 145.

²²⁸ Rufinus' translation, and that Jerome and Rufinus were both students of Didymus is noted by Petersen, 'OUDE,' 199, 199n.33.

²²⁹ Since Rufinus' reference to PA is only a translation of Eusebius, there is no opportunity for him to reflect on other aspects of the pericope that he may have known.

while Didymus (1) knows a version of PA, (2) in a gospel, and (3) if that gospel contains the writing, which it may not, he finds it unremarkable. A significant factor here is that, for Jerome, the ability to write was crucial to his status as a Christian intellectual. Not only did he correspond with other Christians, he attacked opponents, edited volumes, and translated the Holy Scriptures all via his ability to read and write.²³⁰ Didymus, however, had attained his position as an authoritative teacher by memorization. In *Vir. ill.* 109.1, Jerome notes that Didymus went blind during childhood, and thus did not even know the alphabet. Though Didymus finds (a version of) PA instructive, it is unsurprising that someone who was technically illiterate may have found a grapho-literate Jesus insignificant (again assuming that Didymus' version of PA included the writing, which it may not have). That part of the paradigm of Jesus in PA is inapplicable to Didymus, but the perfect model for a literate leader such as Jerome.

Admittedly, one is here dealing in arguments *e silentio*. But to fill out this possibility further one should note that the previous discussions of Cyprian's and Ambrose's utilizations of literacy in order to create and reinforce their authority are in no way fully descriptive of the spectrum of church leadership in the second to fourth centuries. In the farther reaches of Christendom, as Christian communities sprang up as the result of missionary activity into previously untouched territory, one could hardly expect every church leader to have a formal education, if any education. Fox observes, 'Little bishoprics were multiplying in the provinces of north Africa and who knows what lowly level of culture some of their holders had attained?'²³¹

Pertinent textual evidence concerning PA proves most illuminating at this point of the discussion. The *Didascalia* is the earliest certain attestation of PA. The text presents PA as an example for bishops and makes no reference to Jesus' acts of writing.²³² Yet, the *Didascalia* also contains the following instructions for appointing a pastor as a bishop: 'But if it is possible, let him be instructed and able to teach; but if he does not know letters, he shall be capable and skilful in the word;

²³⁰ See Megan H. Williams, *The Monk and the Book: Jerome and the Invention of Christian Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

²³¹ Fox, 'Literacy,' 135.

²³² Additionally, it is highly unlikely that the version of PA known to the author(s) of the *Didascalia* is the one found in GJohn, for in the *Didascalia* version the 'elders' leave the judgment of the adulteress to Jesus and actually depart the scene after bringing her to him. See *Didascalia* 7 [89].

and let him be advanced in years.’²³³ Importantly, literate bishops are preferred; but the *Didascalia* also envisages situations where a bishop may be illiterate yet still rise to the position of bishop.²³⁴ Is it a coincidence that *Didascalia*’s PA does not contain a reference to Jesus having the highest possible level of literacy when it is addressed to a context where those instructed to emulate this portrait of Jesus may be utterly illiterate?

The *Didascalia* certainly predates Didymus the Blind, but they hold in common (1) knowledge of PA apparently independent of GJohn, (2) either silence with regards to Jesus’ writing or ignorance of it, (3) an author or audience who is illiterate, and (4) are outside the Latin Church. Though these facts are not enough to provide conclusive results, they demonstrate both the strong connection between, on the one hand, Christian authors who read PA in GJohn *and* remark on Jesus’ writing, and, on the other hand, the importance of literacy to the role and function of prominent Latin Christian leaders such as Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine.

These further considerations are suggestive of the catalyst for recognizing PA’s claim for a (divinely) grapho-literate Jesus once it had been inserted in GJohn, which may, in turn, offer more clues as to when and where the interpolator inserted PA in the first place. One must allow enough time for the manuscript tradition to contain multiple Greek and Latin copies that include PA in GJohn prior to Jerome and Ambrose in the fourth century, but following the rise of the fourfold gospel collection (the likely impetus for the interpolator choosing GJohn, with the Johannine narrative itself guiding his choice of John 7.53–8.11) in the mid-second century. Therefore, while it is possible that the interpolator inserted PA as early as the mid-second century or as late as the early/mid-fourth century, I here propose the third century CE as a cautious estimate. Further factors—such as the freedom of the manuscript tradition, pagan criticism of Christian illiteracy, and the rise of

²³³ *Didascalia* 6 [44] (Vööbus).

²³⁴ S. P. Brock, ‘Greek and Syriac in Late Antique Syria,’ in *Literacy and Power*, 158, demonstrates that many Christian leaders in Syria chose to write in Syriac rather than Greek even though they knew Greek, and that this ‘provided Syriac with the necessary prestige to enable it to compete as a literary language (in specific spheres) with the language of contemporary political power.’ One may wonder, then, if the bishops envisaged in the *Didascalia* are illiterate in Greek or Syriac. This, however, is a secondary concern to the present emphasis that the *Didascalia* acknowledges the presence of illiterate bishops in the liturgical ranks.

monarchical bishops and Christian intellectuals—also support a third-century inclusion date.



Literate Jesus Image 1—Scroll in Left Hand



Literate Jesus Image 2—Healing of the Man Born Blind with Right Hand, Scroll in Left Hand



Literate Jesus Image 3—Open Scroll in Left Hand

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Conclusion

Summary of Chapters and Directions for Future Research

This thesis has argued in detail that an attentive interpolator inserted PA into GJohn around the third century CE, and that he did so in order to amend the authoritative image of Jesus in the fourfold gospel collection with an explicit portrayal of Jesus' grapho-literacy. He chose John 7.53–8.11, amongst other reasons, in order to demonstrate that Jesus did indeed know his letters, contrary to the expectations of the Jews of John 7.15. The interpolator's own socio-historical context—where pagans and Jews alike were criticizing Christianity and its founder, producing an acute need for educated intellectual Christian leaders—prompted his augmentation of the Johannine Jesus. This brief concluding section will draw the thesis to a close by providing a summary of the previous chapters and then offering possibilities for future research on PA along these lines.

1. Summary of Chapters

Chapter One provided a history of research on John 8.6, 8 and catalogued thirty-six interpretations of Jesus' actions of writing in the ground. It then proceeded to argue that the vast majority of these interpretations failed to account for two issues: (1) John 8.6, 8 is the only text in canonical and non-canonical Jesus tradition to attach *gra, fw* or its cognates to Jesus and thus the only place to portray Jesus as writing;¹ and (2) Jesus mysteriously writes not once but twice. Chapter One closed by suggesting that the unique image of a grapho-literate Jesus is not only the key to understanding PA, but also to understanding its transmission-history, thus setting the course for the thesis.

Chapter Two took up the primary issue of whether the interpolator's usage of *katagra, fw* in John 8.6 and *gra, fw* in John 8.8 could be a claim that Jesus was capable of writing alphabetized letters. It concluded in the affirmative after surveying *katagra, fw* diachronically generally and synchronically in Greco-Roman texts, Oxyrhyncus papyri, and, especially, the LXX, as well as surveying

¹ As noted in Chapter Nine, outside Jesus tradition proper, the fourth-century CE *Dialogue of Adamantius* also applies *gra, fw* to Jesus in its polemical claim that Jesus wrote the gospel.

gra, fw in the NT. While non-literary usages of *katagra, fw* do appear, the evidence from the socio-historical milieu of early Christianity is overwhelmingly in favour of interpreting Jesus' actions as a claim for the ability to compose writing, i.e., grapho-literacy.

Chapter Three then set the claim of PA that Jesus was capable of writing in its ancient context by surveying the literary environment of the ancient world. It focused specifically upon who learned to write and how they did so in Greco-Roman Egypt, Ancient and Second Temple Judaism, and early Christianity. This chapter observed that literacy existed in gradations with widespread illiteracy being the norm. Even amongst those who were literate, however, not all who could read were able to write. To claim that Jesus was capable of compositional writing, then, was to claim that he had attained the highest form of literate education.

Chapter Four considered the practitioners of writing in Judaism, the scribes, and noted that, in their context, which was dominated by the Torah and other Hebrew scriptures, the education and status associated with being able to write led certain individuals to function as 'text-brokers.' Text-brokers mediated the holy texts to the illiterate masses and thus, as the point of access to those sacred traditions, acquired a significant amount of power. In such a context, literacy led to the social position of authoritative interpreters of Mosaic Law. It is no coincidence that 'the scribes' appear in PA (alone in GJohn), where Jesus demonstrates the literate skill particularly associated with them. PA thus portrays a showdown between rival text-brokers.

Chapters Five to Eight turned to PA specifically, considering its claim that Jesus was grapho-literate against this broader background of literacy and the social power it afforded. Chapter Five laid the groundwork for the further chapters by considering PA's twelve known manuscript locations. In light of the patristic and manuscript evidence, Chapter Five demonstrated that when the interpolator initially inserted PA into GJohn (and the canonical gospels in general), he did so at John 7.53–8.11.

With Chapter Five demonstrating that John 7.53–8.11 was PA's initial location, Chapter Six considered what in that narrative context could have led the interpolator to choose a narrative location for PA between John 7 and John 8. Though this chapter acknowledged possible connections with John 8 (especially John 8.15), it concentrated particularly upon the narrative of John 7. Chapter Six argued

that the likely impetus for the interpolator's insertion of PA was the questioning of Jesus' literacy in John 7.15 and his status as a prophet in John 7.52. The Jewish scepticism reflected in both passages was intertwined with Jesus' Galilean heritage.

Chapter Seven offered a general exegesis of PA in dialogue with recent research on the passage. This exegesis avoided protracted discussion of John 8.6, 8, which it reserved for Chapter Eight.

Chapter Eight, the crux of the thesis, argued in detail for interpreting John 8.6, 8 as a claim that Jesus was grapho-literate. I there asserted that the interpolator's claim functioned with two levels of meaning. On one level, Jesus' demonstration of his grapho-literacy in PA proved that his scribal literacy—and thus his access to the Torah—was at least equivalent to the most educated amongst his conglomerate opponents 'the scribes and the Pharisees' (i.e., the scribes). On a second level, however, the vocabulary the interpolator employs in order to describe Jesus' writing (*katagra, fw* and *gra, fw*) and his syntactical arrangement of that vocabulary (the compound verb first, followed by the simple) reveal his dependence upon Exodus 32.15. In light of this dependence, the further claim of the interpolator is that Jesus' level of access to the Torah is not to be paralleled with Moses the receiver of the law, but rather with God the author of the law. This chapter closed by noting that the two levels of meaning in PA, as well as the claim of Jesus' superiority to Moses, are two of a number of similarities between PA and GJohn.

Chapter Nine proceeded to suggest a plausible socio-historical milieu that prompted the interpolator to insert PA into GJohn. Disagreeing with the reigning scholarly explanation for PA's eventual inclusion into GJohn, the suppression theory, this chapter instead proposed that the interpolator inserted PA as a response to pagan criticisms of illiteracy, in keeping with the Church's need for literate intellectual leaders to follow. By situating PA's explicit claim for a grapho-literature Jesus along a progression of increasingly overt portrayals of Jesus' literate status, Chapter Nine concluded by suggesting a third-century CE insertion date.

In summary, this thesis has offered at least two original contributions to the field of NT studies. First, it is the first fully articulated interpretation of John 8.6, 8 as a claim for a grapho-literate Jesus. Second, it offers the first plausible transmission-history of PA in light of this claim for Jesus. Both of these contributions are the natural outgrowth of viewing PA against the literary

environment of the early Church, and in this sense there remains much work to be done on PA.

2. Directions for Future Research

Scholarly research on PA has been dominated by text-critical approaches aimed at demonstrating the non-Johannine authenticity of PA on the one hand and, on the other hand, literary/narrative readings of PA centred upon the adulteress and/or her sin. This study has instead viewed PA in light of the early Church's scribal culture, and hopefully has opened new angles from which to view this important Jesus tradition. I will here suggest three future research possibilities on PA, noting that some of this research is already underway.

2.1 The Pre-Johannine Transmission-History of PA—Was It Oral?

This thesis has been concerned specifically with PA's insertion into GJohn and argued that this represents not just a stage in the transmission of PA as Jesus tradition, but also a stage in the transmission of GJohn as Jesus tradition. It has left aside a number of related questions, however, concerning PA's transmission-history prior to its insertion. Perhaps most obvious is whether the interpolator knew PA as written Jesus tradition or oral Jesus tradition. Scholars commonly refer to PA as 'floating' or oral tradition, but, as yet, no thorough study of this issue exists. Beyond space concerns, one reason the present study has avoided offering an opinion is the difficulty in establishing appropriate criteria for determining whether a given tradition is oral or written, especially when the only access one has to that tradition is via a written text.

2.2 PA and the Interaction of Oral and Written Jesus Tradition

Strongly related to the previous research possibility, and despite the many theories on oral and written Jesus tradition, no scholar (to my knowledge) has recognized the implications of PA's unique status as an independent Jesus tradition that a written (fourfold) gospel then absorbed. Though commonly mentioned with the Long Ending of Mark as one of the longest of NT interpolations, PA is technically different and thus unique amongst textual variants. Regardless of other similarities, the Long Ending of Mark is a compilation of other canonical Jesus

traditions upon which its author was dependent.² PA, however, is an intact unit of Jesus tradition unattested elsewhere in the canonical gospels.³ Interesting to consider in this regard is that both within the narrative of PA and the actions of the interpolator in inserting the pericope into GJohn, one finds a(n) (oral) Jesus tradition that is then purposefully surrounded by writing.

If PA was indeed oral tradition (or at least the interpolator knew it as oral tradition), the phenomenon of its insertion is primary evidence for the interaction of oral and written Jesus tradition. If PA was another written tradition, this phenomenon is, even more interestingly, primary evidence for the interaction of two different kinds of written Jesus tradition (the one part of the fourfold collection, the other independent). Regardless of whether PA was oral or written, GJohn's absorption of PA demonstrates that, into the second and third centuries, written gospel texts, even authoritative ones, functioned in a 'performance mode' in light of the texts' scribe (or performer) and readers (or [intended] audience).⁴ PA is thus primary evidence that long-held assumptions that written tradition was 'fixed' while oral tradition was 'free' are incorrect.⁵

2.3 PA's Socio-Historical Background

More can be said regarding the *Sitz(e) im Leben der Kirche* of PA beyond its insertion into GJohn. How did that socio-historical context change and how did those changes inevitably affect PA's appearance in manuscripts and patristic citations? Jennifer Wright Knust is currently carrying out much research in this area, specifically with reference to PA's increasingly anti-Jewish portrayals of Jesus'

² See James A. Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries and Their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark* (WUNT 2.112; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 123–56.

³ Some may argue that John 21 is a similar phenomenon to PA. This would be the case if numerous manuscripts that included John 21 existed alongside numerous manuscripts that did not include John 21, as is the case with PA. To date, there is no manuscript evidence that GJohn ever circulated without John 21 and some recent studies have demonstrated the degree to which John 1–20 is connected to chapter 21 on the narrative level. For example, see Bauckham, *Jesus*, 364–9.

⁴ The language of Jesus traditions functioning in 'performance' or 'oral' mode is particularly associated with the research of James D. G. Dunn. See his 'Altering,' 115; *Jesus Remembered*, 248–9, 253–4; 'Q¹ as Oral Tradition,' in *Written Gospel*, 50, 53.

⁵ Numerous scholars trace the opposition of 'fixed' written tradition to 'free' oral tradition to the seminal Kelber, *Oral and Written*. I address these issues more fully in a paper given at the 2007 annual SBL meeting, which will be published as Keith, 'Adulteress' Entrance.'

enemies. She has already published one article in this regard, and is currently working on a book-length treatment of PA.⁶

There are, obviously, many more possible directions for research on PA. These three, however, along with this thesis, depart from previous approaches and demonstrate the interesting and exciting research possibilities available to scholars once they consider PA in the scribal and literary environment of early Christianity. Its importance as a window into early Christianity perhaps parallels the degree to which earlier and present scholars have overlooked it. PA clearly was one of the most spoken, read, remembered, and transmitted stories about Jesus in the early Church, deserving its reputation as one of the most popular stories in the gospels.

⁶ Knust, 'Early Christian Re-Writing,' 485–536. Her book is tentatively titled *Loose Texts, Loose Women: A History of Jesus, an Adulteress, and the Gospel of John*.